

STANFORD

NOVELS

1871

THE HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION
OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
IN THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES
BY JOHN CALVIN
TRANSLATED BY GUY RICHARDSON

STANFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

1871

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STANDARD

NOVELS.

N° CII.

“ No kind of literature is so generally attractive as Fiction. Pictures of life and manners, and Stories of adventure, are more eagerly received by the many than graver productions, however important these latter may be. APULEIUS is better remembered by his fable of Cupid and Psyche than in his abstruser Platonic writings ; and the Decameron of BOCCACCIO has outlived the Latin Treatises, and other learned works of that author.”

BELFORD REGIS;

OR,

SKETCHES OF A COUNTRY LIFE.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

BELL & BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH:

CUMMING AND FERGUSON, DUBLIN.

1846.

Mitford
Belford
Regis

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BELFORD REGIS.

Hester reached the porch, & saw before her Giles Cousins with a smile of satisfaction softening his rugged countenance, his good wife peeping over his shoulder, and Mr. Carlton & Mr. Finlay in the back ground

London. Published by Richard Bentley, 1846.

BELFORD REGIS;

OR,

SKETCHES OF A COUNTRY TOWN.

BY

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,

AUTHORESS OF

“RIENZI,” “OUR VILLAGE,” &c.

LONDON :

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET

BELL & BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH :

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ROBERT BENTLEY NEW BURLINGTON STREET

AND

JOHN AND WILKINSON, DUBLIN

1840.

TO
HIS GRACE
THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE,

In token of sincere gratitude for many kindnesses received at his hands, and of unfeigned admiration for his refined taste, his active benevolence, and his wide-reaching sympathy,—that sympathy which at all seasons, and more especially in times like the present, forms the best and safest link between the different classes of society,—

THESE HOMELY SKETCHES

are most respectfully inscribed by

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

IN an Article on the last Volume of "Our Village," the courteous critic recommended, since I had taken leave of rural life, that I should engage lodgings in the next country town, and commence a series of sketches of the inhabitants; a class of the community which, whilst it forms so large a portion of our population, occupies so small a space in our literature, and amongst whom, more perhaps than amongst any other order of English society, may be traced the peculiarities, the prejudices, and the excellences of the national character.

"Upon this hint I *wrote*;" and the present work would have been called simply "Our Market Town," had not an ingenious contemporary, by forestalling my intended title, compelled me to give to "*my* airy nothings, a local habitation and a name."* It would not quite do to have two "Simon Pures" in the field, each asserting his identity and jostling for precedence; although I am so far from accusing Mr. Peregrine Reedpen (as the Frenchman did the ancients) of having stolen my best thoughts, that I am firmly of opinion that were twenty writers to sit down at once to compose a book upon this theme, there would not be the slightest danger of their interfering with each other. Every separate work would bear the stamp of the Author's mind, of his peculiar train of thought, and habits of observation. The subject is as inexhaustible as nature herself.

* "Our Town; or, Rough Sketches of Character, Manners, &c. By Peregrine Reedpen." 2 vols. London, 1834.

PREFACE.

One favour, the necessity of which has been pressed upon me by painful experience, I have to entreat most earnestly at the hands of my readers, — a favour the very reverse of that which story-tellers by profession are wont to implore ! It is that they will do me the justice *not* to believe one word of these sketches from beginning to end. General truth of delineation I hope there is ; but of individual portrait painting, I most seriously assert that none has been intended, and none, I firmly trust, can be found. From this declaration I except of course the notes which consist professedly of illustrative anecdotes, and the paper on the Greek plays, which contains a feeble attempt to perpetuate one of the happiest recollections of my youth. Belford itself, too, may perhaps be identified ; for I do not deny having occasionally stolen some touches of local scenery from the beautiful town that comes so frequently before my eyes. But the inhabitants of Belford, the Stephen Lanes, the Peter Jenkinses, and the King Harwoods, exist only in these pages ; and if there should be any persons who, after this protest, should obstinately persist in mistaking for fact that which the Author herself declares to be fiction, I can only compare them to the sagacious gentleman mentioned in “ *The Spectator*,” who upon reading over “ *The Whole Duty of Man*,” wrote the names of different people in the village where he lived at the side of every sin mentioned by the author, and with half-a-dozen strokes of his pen turned the whole of that devout and pious treatise into a libel.

Be more merciful to these slight volumes, gentle reader, and farewell !

THREE MILE CROSS,

Feb. 25th, 1835.

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BELFORD REGIS.

THE TOWN.

ABOUT three miles to the north of our village (if my readers may be supposed to have heard of such a place) stands the good town of Belford Regis. The approach to it, straight as a dart, runs along a wide and populous turnpike-road (for as yet railways are not), all alive with carts and coaches, waggons and phaetons, horse people and foot people, sweeping rapidly or creeping lazily up and down the gentle undulations with which the surface of the country is varied; and the borders, checkered by patches of common, rich with hedge-row timber, and sprinkled with cottages, and, I grieve to say, with that cottage pest, the beer-houses,—and here and there enlivened by dwellings of more pretension and gentility—become more thickly inhabited as we draw nearer to the metropolis of the county: to say nothing of the three cottages all in a row, with two small houses detached, which a board affixed to one of them informs the passers-by is ‘Two mile Cross;’ or of those opposite neighbours the wheelwrights and the blacksmiths, about half-a-mile farther; or the little farm close to the pound; or the series of buildings called the Long Row, terminating at the end next the road with an old-fashioned and most picturesque public-house, with pointed roofs, and benches at the door, and round the large elm before it,—benches which are generally filled by thirsty wayfarers, and waggoners watering their horses and partaking a more generous liquor themselves.

Leaving these objects undescribed, no sooner do we get within a mile of the town, than our approach is indicated by successive market-gardens on either side, crowned, as we ascend the long hill on which the turnpike-gate stands, by an

extensive nursery-ground, gay with long beds of flowers, with trellised walks covered with creepers, with whole acres of flowering shrubs, and ranges of green-houses, the glass glittering in the southern sun. Then the turnpike-gate with its civil keeper—then another public-house—then the clear bright pond on the top of the hill, and then the rows of small tenements, with here and there a more ambitious single cottage standing in its own pretty garden, which forms the usual gradation from the country to the town.

About this point, where one road, skirting the great pond and edged by small houses, diverges from the great southern entrance, and where two streets meeting or parting lead by separate ways down the steep hill to the centre of the town, stands a handsome mansion, surrounded by orchards and pleasure-grounds; across which is perhaps to be seen the very best view of Belford, with its long ranges of modern buildings in the outskirts, mingled with picturesque old streets; the venerable towers of St. Stephen's and St. Nicholas'; the light and tapering spire of St. John's; the huge monastic ruins of the abbey; the massive walls of the county gaol; the great river winding along like a thread of silver; trees and gardens mingling amongst all; and the whole landscape enriched and lightened by the dropping elms of the foreground, adding an illusive beauty to the picture, by breaking the too formal outline, and veiling just exactly those parts which most require concealment.

Nobody can look at Belford from this point without feeling that it is a very English and very charming scene; and the impression does not diminish on farther acquaintance. We read at once the history of the place: that it is an ancient borough town, which has recently been extended to nearly double its former size; so that it unites, in no common degree, the old romantic irregular structures in which our ancestors delighted, with the handsome and uniform buildings which are the fashion now-a-days. I suppose that people are right in their taste, and that the modern houses are pleasantest to live in; but, beyond all question, those antique streets are the prettiest to look at. The occasional blending, too, is good. Witness the striking piece of street scenery, which was once accidentally forced upon my attention as I took shelter from a shower of rain in a shop, about ten doors up the right-hand side of Friar-street: the old vicarage house of St. Nicholas,

embowered in evergreens ; the lofty town-hall, and the handsome modern house of my friend Mr. Beauchamp ; the fine church-tower of St. Nicholas ; the picturesque piazza underneath ; the jutting corner of Friar-street ; the old irregular shops in the market-place, and the trees of the Forbury just peeping between, with all their varieties of light and shadow ! It is a scene fit for that matchless painter of towns, Mr. Jones. I went to the door to see if the shower were over, was caught by its beauty, and stood looking at it in the sunshine long after the rain had ceased.

Then, again, for a piece of antiquity, what can be more picturesque than the high solitary bay-window in that old house in Mill-lane, garlanded with grapes, and hanging over the water, as if to admire its own beauty in that clear mirror ? That projecting window is a picture in itself.

Or, for a modern scene, what can surpass the High Bridge on a sun-shiny day ? The bright river, crowded with barges and small craft ; the streets, and wharfs, and quays, all alive with the busy and stirring population of the country and the town ; — a combination of light and motion. In looking at a good view of the High Bridge at noon, you should seem to hear the bustle. I have never seen a more cheerful subject.

Cheerfulness is, perhaps, the word that best describes the impression conveyed by the more frequented streets of Belford. It is not a manufacturing town, and its trade is solely that dependent on its own considerable population, and the demands of a thickly inhabited neighbourhood ; so that, except in the very centre of that trade, the streets where the principal shops are congregated, or on certain public occasions, such as elections, fairs, and markets, the stir hardly amounts to bustle. Neither is it a professed place of gaiety, like Cheltenham or Brighton ; where London people go to find or make a smaller London out of town. It is neither more nor less than an honest English borough, fifty good miles from “ the deep, deep sea,” and happily free from the slightest suspicion of any spa, chalybeate or saline. We have, it is true, “ the Kennet swift, for silver eels renowned,” passing through the walls, and the mighty Thames for a near neighbour — water in plenty, but luckily all fresh ! They who sympathise in my dislike of the vulgar finery, the dull dissipation, of a watering-place, will feel all the felicity of this exemption.

Clean, airy, orderly, and affluent ; well paved, well lighted, well watched ; abounding in wide and spacious streets, filled with excellent shops and handsome houses ;—such is the outward appearance, the bodily form, of our market-town. For the vital spirit, the life-blood that glows and circulates through the dead mass of mortar and masonry, — in other words, for the inhabitants, — I must refer my courteous reader to the following pages. If they do not appear to at least equal advantage, it will be the fault of the chronicler, and not of the subject ; and one cause, one singular cause, which may make the chronicler somewhat deficient as a painter of modern manners, may be traced to the fact of her having known the place, not too well, but too long.

It is now about forty years ago, since I, a damsel, scarcely so high as the table on which I am writing, and somewhere about four years old, first became an inhabitant of Belford ; and really I remember a great deal not worth remembering concerning the place, especially our own garden, and a certain dell on the Bristol road to which I used to resort for primroses. Then we went away ; and my next recollections date some ten years afterwards, when my father again resided in the outskirts of the town during the time that he was building in the neighbourhood, and I used to pass my holidays there, and loved the place as a school-girl does love her home. And although we have kept up a visiting acquaintance, Belford and I, ever since, and I have watched its improvements of every kind with sincere interest and pleasure, — especially that most striking and yet most gradual change which has taken place amongst the great tradesmen, now so universally intelligent and cultivated, — yet these recollections of thirty years back, my personal experience of the far narrower and more limited society of the gentry of the place — the old ladies and their tea visits, the gentlemen and their whist club, and the merry Christmas parties, with their round games and their social suppers, their mirth and their jests ; — recollections such as these, with the dear familiar faces and the pleasant associations of my girlish days, will prevail, do what I can, over the riper but less vivid impressions of a maturer age, and the more refined but less picturesque state of manners of the present race of inhabitants.

So far it seemed necessary to premise, lest these general

sketches of country town society (for of individual portraiture I again assert my innocence) should exhibit Belford as a quarter of a century behind in the grand march of civilisation: and I hereby certify, that whatever want of modern elegance or of modish luxury may be observed in these delineations, is to be ascribed, not to any such deficiency in the genteel circles of that "famous town," but to the peculiar tastes and old-fashioned predilections of the writer.

STEPHEN LANE, THE BUTCHER.

THE greatest man in these parts (I use the word in the sense of Louis-le-Gros, not Louis-le-Grand), the greatest man hereabouts, by at least a stone, is our worthy neighbour Stephen Lane, the grazier,—ex-butcher of Belford. Nothing so big hath been seen since Lambert the gaoler, or the Durham ox.

When he walks he overfills the pavement, and is more difficult to pass than a link of full-dressed misses, or a chain of becloaked dandies. Indeed, a malicious attorney, in drawing up a paving bill for the ancient borough of Belford Regis, once inserted a clause confining Mr. Lane to the middle of the road, together with waggons, vans, stage-coaches, and other heavy articles. Chairs crack under him,—sofas rock,—bolsters groan,—and floors tremble. He hath been stuck in a staircase and jammed in a doorway, and has only escaped being ejected from an omnibus by its being morally and physically impossible that he should get in. His passing the window has some such an effect as an eclipse, or as turning outward the opaque side of that ingenious engine of mischief, a dark lantern. He puts out the light, like Othello. A small wit of our town, by calling a supervisor, who dabbles in riddles, and cuts no inconsiderable figure in the poet's corner of the county newspaper, once perpetrated a conundrum on his person, which, as relating to so eminent and well-known an individual, (for almost every reader of the "H——shire Herald" hath, at some time or other, been a customer of our butcher's,) had the honour of puzzling more people at the Sunday morning break-

fast-table, and of engaging more general attention, than had ever before happened to that respectable journal. A very horrible murder, (and there was that week one of the very first water,) two shipwrecks, an *enlèvement*, and an execution, were all passed over as trifles compared with the interest excited by this literary squib and cracker. A trifling quirk it was to keep Mr. Stacy, the surveyor, a rival bard, fuming over his coffee until the said coffee grew cold; or to hold Miss Anna Maria Watkins, the mantua-maker, in pleasant though painful efforts at divination until the bell rang for church, and she had hardly time to undo her curl-papers and arrange her ringlets; a flimsy quirk it was of a surety, an inconsiderable quiddity! Yet since the courteous readers of the "H——shire Herald" were amused with pondering over it, so perchance may be the no less courteous and far more courtly readers of these slight sketches. I insert it, therefore, for their edification, together with the answer, which was not published in the "Herald" until the H——shire public had remained an entire week in suspense:—"Query—Why is Mr. Stephen Lane like Rembrandt?"—"Answer—Because he is famous for the breadth of his shadow."

The length of his shadow, although by no means in proportion to the width,—for that would have recalled the days when giants walked the land, and Jack, the famous Jack, who borrowed his surname from his occupation, slew them,—was yet of pretty fair dimensions. He stood six feet two inches without his shoes, and would have been accounted an exceedingly tall man if his intolerable fatness had not swallowed up all minor distinctions. That magnificent *beau idéal* of a human mountain, "the fat woman of Brentford," for whom Sir John Falstaff passed not only undetected, but unsuspected, never crossed my mind's eye but as the feminine of Mr. Stephen Lane. Tailors, although he was a liberal and punctual paymaster, dreaded his custom. They could not, charge how they might, contrive to extract any profit from his "huge rotundity." It was not only the quantity of material that he took, and yet that cloth universally called broad was not broad enough for him,—it was not only the stuff, but the work—the sewing, stitching, plaiting, and button-holing without end. The very shears grew weary of their labours. Two fashionable suits might have been constructed in the time

and from the materials consumed in the fabrication of one for Mr. Stephen Lane. Two, did I say? Ay, three or four, with a sufficient allowance of cabbage,—a perquisite never to be extracted from his coats or waistcoats — no, not enough to cover a penwiper. Let the cutter cut his cloth ever so largely, it was always found to be too little. All their measures put together would not go round him; and as to guessing at his proportions by the eye, a tailor might as well attempt to calculate the dimensions of a seventy-four-gun ship,—as soon try to fit a three-decker. Gloves and stockings were made for his especial use. Extras and double extras failed utterly in his case, as the dapper shopman espied at the first glance of his huge paw, a fist which might have felled an ox, and somewhat resembled the dead ox-flesh, commonly called beef, in texture and colour.

To say the truth, his face was pretty much of the same complexion — and yet it was no uncomely visage either; on the contrary, it was a bold, bluff, massive, English countenance, such as Holbein would have liked to paint, in which great manliness and determination were blended with much good-humour, and a little humour of another kind; so that even when the features were in seeming repose, you could foresee how the face would look when a broad smile, and a sly wink, and a knowing nod, and a demure smoothing down of his straight shining hair on his broad forehead gave his wonted cast of drollery to the blunt but merry tradesman, to whom might have been fitly applied the Chinese compliment, “Prosperity is painted on your countenance.”

Stephen Lane, however, had not always been so prosperous, or so famous for the breadth of his shadow. Originally a foundling in the streets of Belford, he owed his very name, like the “Richard Monday” of one of Crabbe’s finest delineations, to the accident of his having been picked up, when apparently about a week old, in a by-lane, close to St. Stephen’s churchyard, and baptized by order of the vestry after the scene of his discovery. Like the hero of the poet, he also was sent to the parish workhouse; but, as unlike to Richard Monday in character as in destiny, he won, by a real or fancied resemblance to a baby whom she had recently lost, the affection of the matron, and was by her care shielded, not

only from the physical dangers of infancy, in such an abode, but from the moral perils of childhood.

Kindly yet roughly reared, Stephen Lane was even as a boy eminent for strength and hardihood, and invincible good-humour. At ten years old he had fought with and vanquished every lad under fifteen, not only in the workhouse proper, but in the immediate purlieus of that respectable domicile; and would have got into a hundred scrapes, had he not been shielded, in the first place, by the active protection of his original patroness, the wife of the superintendent and master of the establishment, whose pet he continued to be; and, in the second, by his own bold and decided, yet kindly and affectionate temper. Never had a boy of ten years old more friends than the poor foundling of St. Stephen's workhouse. There was hardly an inmate of that miscellaneous dwelling, who had not profited, at some time or other, by the good-humoured lad's delightful alertness in obliging, his ready services, his gaiety, his intelligence, and his resource. From mending Master Hunt's crutch, down to rocking the cradle of Dame Green's baby—from fetching the water for the general wash, a labour which might have tried the strength of Hercules, down to leading out for his daily walk the half-blind, half-idiot, half-crazy David Hood, a task which would have worn out the patience of Job, nothing came amiss to him. All was performed with the same cheerful good-will; and the warm-hearted gratitude with which he received kindness was even more attaching than his readiness to perform good offices to others. I question if ever there were a happier childhood than that of the deserted parish-boy. Set aside the pugnaciousness which he possessed in common with other brave and generous animals, and which his protectress, the matron of the house, who had enjoyed in her youth the advantage of perusing some of those novels—now, alas! no more—where the heroes, originally foundlings, turn out to be lords and dukes in the last volume, used to quote in confirmation of her favourite theory that he too would be found to be nobly born, as proofs of his innate high blood;—set aside the foes made by his propensity to single combat, which could hardly fail to exasperate the defeated champions, and Stephen had not an enemy in the world.

At ten years of age, however, the love of independence,

and the desire to try his fortune in the world, began to stir in the spirited lad ; and his kind friend and confidant, the master's wife, readily promised her assistance to set him forth in search of adventures, though she was not a little scandalised to find his first step in life likely to lead him into a butcher's shop ; he having formed an acquaintance with a journeyman slayer of cattle in the neighbourhood, who had interceded with his master to take him on trial as errand-boy, with an understanding that if he showed industry and steadiness, and liked the craft, he might, on easy terms, be accepted as an apprentice. This prospect, which Stephen justly thought magnificent, shocked the lady of the workhouse, who had set her heart on his choosing a different scene of slaughter—killing men, not oxen—going forth as a soldier, turning the fate of a battle, marrying some king's daughter or emperor's niece, and returning in triumph to his native town, a generalissimo at the very least.

Her husband, however, and the parish overseers were of a different opinion. They were much pleased with the proposal, and were (for overseers) really liberal in their manner of meeting it. So that a very few days saw Stephen in blue sleeves and a blue apron—the dress which he still loves best—parading through the streets of Belford, with a tray of meat upon his head, and a huge mastiff called Boxer—whose warlike name matched his warlike nature—following at his heels as if part and parcel of himself. A proud boy was Stephen on that first day of his promotion ; and a still prouder, when, perched on a pony, long the object of his open admiration and his secret ambition, he carried out the orders to the country customers. His very basket danced for joy.

Years wore away, and found the errand-boy transmuted into the apprentice, and the apprentice ripened into the journeyman, with no diminution of industry, intelligence, steadiness, and good-humour. As a young man of two or three and twenty, he was so remarkable for feats of strength and activity, for which his tall and athletic person, not at that period encumbered by flesh, particularly fitted him, as to be the champion of the town and neighbourhood ; and large bets have been laid and won on his sparring, and wrestling, and lifting weights all but incredible. He has walked to London and back (a distance of above sixty miles) against time, leap-

ing in his way all the turnpike-gates that he found shut, without even laying his hand upon the bars. He has driven a flock of sheep against a shepherd by profession, and has rowed against a bargeman ; and all this without suffering these dangerous accomplishments to beguile him into the slightest deviation from his usual sobriety and good conduct. So that, when at six-and-twenty he became, first, head man to Mr. Jackson, the great butcher in the Butts ; then married Mr. Jackson's only daughter ; then, on his father-in-law's death, succeeded to the business and a very considerable property ; and, finally, became one of the most substantial, respectable, and influential inhabitants of Belford, — every one felt that he most thoroughly deserved his good fortune : and although his prosperity has continued to increase with his years, and those who envied have seldom had the comfort of being called on to condole with him on calamities of any kind, yet, such is the power of his straightforward fair dealing, and his enlarged liberality, that his political adversaries, on the occasion of a contested election, or some such trial of power, are driven back to the workhouse and St. Stephen's lane, to his obscure and ignoble origin, (for the noble parents whom his poor old friend used to prognosticate have never turned up,) to find materials for party malignity.

Prosperous, most prosperous, has Stephen Lane been through life ; but by far the best part of his good fortune (setting pecuniary advantages quite out of the question) was his gaining the heart and hand of such a woman as Margaret Jackson. In her youth she was splendidly beautiful — of the luxuriant and gorgeous beauty in which Giorgione revelled ; and now, in the autumn of her days, amplified, not like her husband, but so as to suit her matronly character, she seems to me almost as delightful to look upon as she could have been in her earliest spring. I do not know a prettier picture than to see her sitting at her own door, on a summer afternoon, surrounded by her children and her grand-children, — all of them handsome, gay, and cheerful, — with her knitting on her knee, and her sweet face beaming with benevolence and affection, smiling on all around, and seeming as if it were her sole desire to make every one about her as good and as happy as herself. One cause of the long endurance of her beauty is undoubtedly its delightful expression. The sunshine and harmony of

mind depicted in her countenance would have made plain features pleasing ; and there was an intelligence, an enlargement of intellect, in the bright eyes and the fair expanded forehead, which mingled well with the sweetness that dimpled round her lips. Butcher's wife and butcher's daughter though she were, yet was she a graceful and gracious woman,—one of nature's gentlewomen in look and in thought. All her words were candid—all her actions liberal—all her pleasures unselfish—though, in her great pleasure of giving, I am not quite sure that she was so—she took such extreme delight in it. All the poor of the parish and of the town came to her as a matter of course—that is always the case with the eminently charitable ; but children also applied to her for their little indulgences, as if by instinct. All the boys in the street used to come to her to supply their several desires ; to lend them knives and give them string for kites, or pencils for drawing, or balls for cricket, as the matter might be. Those huge pockets of hers were a perfect toy-shop, and so the urchins knew. And the little damsels, their sisters, came to her also for materials for dolls' dresses, or odd bits of ribbon for pincushions, or coloured silks to embroider their needle-cases, or any of the thousand-and-one knick-knacks which young girls fancy they want. However out of the way the demand might seem, there was the article in Mrs. Lane's great pocket. She knew the tastes of her clients, and was never unprovided. And in the same ample receptacle, mixed with knives, and balls, and pencils for the boys, and dolls' dresses, and sometimes even a doll itself, for the girls, might be found sugar-plums, and cakes, and apples, and gingerbread-nuts for the “toddling wee things,” for whom even dolls have no charms. There was no limit to Mrs. Lane's bounty, or to the good-humoured alacrity with which she would interrupt a serious occupation to satisfy the claims of the small people. Oh, how they all loved Mrs. Lane !

Another and a very different class also loved the kind and generous inhabitant of the Butts—the class who, having seen better days, are usually averse to accepting obligations from those whom they have been accustomed to regard as their inferiors. With them Mrs. Lane's delicacy was remarkable. Mrs. Lucas, the curate's widow, often found some unspoken luxury, a sweetbread, or so forth, added to her slender order ;

and Mr. Hughes, the consumptive young artist, could never manage to get his bill. Our good friend the butcher had his full share in the benevolence of these acts ; but the manner of them belonged wholly to his wife.

Her delicacy, however, did not, fortunately for herself and for her husband, extend to her domestic habits. She was well content to live in the rude plenty in which her father lived, and in which Stephen revelled ; and by this assimilation of taste, she not only insured her own comfort, but preserved, unimpaired, her influence over his coarser but kindly and excellent disposition. It was, probably, to this influence that her children owed an education which, without raising them in the slightest degree above their station or their home, yet followed the spirit of the age, and added considerable cultivation, and plain but useful knowledge, to the strong manly sense of their father, and her own sweet and sunny temperament. They are just what the children of such parents ought to be. The daughters, happily married in their own rank of life ; the sons, each in his different line, following the footsteps of their father, and amassing large fortunes, not by paltry savings, or daring speculations, but by well-grounded and judicious calculation — by sound and liberal views — by sterling sense and downright honesty.

Universally as Mrs. Lane was beloved, Stephen had his enemies. He was a politician — a Reformer — a Radical, in those days in which reform was not so popular as it has been lately : he loved to descant on liberty, and economy, and retrenchment, and reform, and carried his theory into practice, in a way exceedingly inconvenient to the Tory member, whom he helped to oust ; to the mayor and corporation, whom he watched as a cat watches a mouse, or as Mr. Hume watches the cabinet ministers ; and to all gas companies, and paving companies, and water companies, and contractors of every sort, whom he attacks as monopolisers and speculators, and twenty more long words with bad meanings, and torments out of their lives ; — for he is a terrible man in a public meeting, hath a loud, sonorous voice, excellent lungs, cares for nobody, and is quite entirely inaccessible to conviction, the finest of all qualities for your thorough-going partisan. All the Tories hated Mr. Lane.

But the Tories latterly have formed but a small minority

in Belford ; and amongst the Whigs and Radicals, or, to gather the two parties into one word, the Reformers, he was decidedly popular — the leader of the opulent tradespeople both socially and politically. He it was — this denouncer of mayor's feasts and parish festivals — who, after the great contest, which his candidate gained by three, gave to the new member a dinner more magnificent, as he declared, than any he had ever seen or ever imagined — a dinner like the realization of an epicure's dream, or an embodiment of some of the visions of the old dramatic poets, accompanied by wines so aristocratic, that they blushed to find themselves on a butcher's table. He was president of a smoking-club, and vice-president of half-a-dozen societies where utility and charity come in the shape of a good dinner ; was a great man at a Smithfield cattle-show ; an eminent looker-on at the bowling-green, which salutary exercise he patronised and promoted by sitting at an open window in a commodious smoking-room commanding the scene of action ; and a capital performer of catches and glees.

He was musical, very, — did I not say so when talking of his youthful accomplishments ? — playing by ear, “with fingers like toes” (as somebody said of Handel), both on the piano and the flute, and singing, in a fine bass voice, many of the old songs which are so eminently popular and national. His voice was loudest at church, giving body, as it were, to the voices of the rest of the congregation, and “God save the King” at the theatre would not have been worth hearing without Mr. Lane — he put his whole heart into it ; for, with all his theoretical radicalism, the King — any one of the three kings in whose reign he hath flourished, for he did not reserve his loyalty for our present popular monarch, but bestowed it in full amplitude on his predecessors, the two last of the Georges — the King hath not a more loyal subject. He is a great patron of the drama, especially the comic drama, and likes no place better than the stage-box at the Belford theatre, a niche meant for six, which exactly fits him. All-fours is his favourite game, and Joe Miller his favourite author.

His retirement from business and from Belford occasioned a general astonishment and consternation. It was perfectly understood that he could afford to retire from business as well as any tradesman who ever gave up a flourishing shop in that

independent borough ; but the busybodies, who take so unaccountable a pleasure in meddling with everybody's concerns, had long ago decided that he never would do so ; and that he should abandon the good town at the very moment when the progress of the Reform Bill had completed his political triumphs — when the few adversaries who remained to the cause, as he was wont emphatically to term it, had not a foot to stand upon — did appear the most wonderful wonder of wonders that had occurred since the days of Katterfelto. Stephen Lane, without Belford ! — Belford, especially in its reformed state, without Stephen Lane, appeared as incredible as the announcements of the bottle-conjuror. Stephen Lane to abandon the great shop in the Butts ! What other place would ever hold him ? And to quit the scene of his triumphs too ! to fly from the very field of victory ! — the thing seemed impossible !

It was, however, amongst the impossibilities that turn out true. Stephen Lane *did* leave the reformed borough, perhaps all the sooner because it *was* reformed, and his work was over — his occupation was gone. It is certain that, without perhaps exactly knowing his own feelings, our good butcher did feel the vacuum, the want of an exciting object, which often attends upon the fulfilment of a great hope. He also felt and understood better the entire cessation of opposition amongst his old enemies, the corporation party. “Dang it, they might ha’ shown fight, these corporationers ! I thought Ben Bailey had had more bottom !” was his exclamation, after a borough-meeting which had passed off unanimously ; and, scandalised at the pacific disposition of his adversaries, our puissant grazier turned his steps towards “fresh fields and pastures new.”

He did not move very far. Just over the border-line, which divides the parish of St. Stephen, in the loyal and independent borough of Belford, from the adjoining hamlet of Sunham — that is to say, exactly half a mile from the great shop in the Butts, did Mr. Lane take up his abode, calling his suburban habitation, which was actually joined to the town by two rows of two-story houses, one of them fronted with poplars, and called Marvell Terrace, in compliment to the patriot of that name in Charles's days, — calling this *rus in urbe* of his “the country,” after the fashion of the inhabitants of Kensington and Hackney, and the other suburban villages

which surround London proper ; as if people who live in the midst of brick houses could have a right to the same rustic title with those who live amongst green fields. Compared to the Butts, however, Mr. Lane's new residence was almost rural ; and the country he called it accordingly.

Retaining, however, his old town predilections, his large, square, commodious, and very ugly red house, with very white mouldings and window-frames, (red, picked out with white,) and embellished by a bright green door and a resplendent brass knocker, was placed close to the roadside—as close as possible ; and the road happening to be that which led from the town of Belford to the little place called London, he had the happiness of counting above sixty stage-coaches, which passed his door in the twenty-four hours, with vans, waggons, carts, and other vehicles in proportion ; and of enjoying, not only from his commodious mansion, but also from the window of a smoking-room at the end of a long brick wall which parted his garden from the road, all the clatter, dust, and din of these several equipages—the noise being duly enhanced by there being, just opposite his smoking-room window, a public-house of great resort, where most of the coaches stopped to take up parcels and passengers, and where singing, drinking, and four-corners were going on all the day long.

One of his greatest pleasures in this retirement seems to be to bring all around him—wife, children, and grand-children—to the level of his own size, or that of his prize ox,—the expressions are nearly synonymous. The servant-lads have a chubby breadth of feature, like the stone heads, with wings under them (*soi-disant* cherubim), which one sees perched round old monuments ; and the maids have a broad, Dutch look, full and florid, like the women in Teniers' pictures. The very animals seem bursting with over-fatness : the great horse who draws his substantial equipage labours under the double weight of his master's flesh and his own ; his cows look like stalled oxen ; and the leash of large red greyhounds, on whose prowess and pedigree he prides himself, and whom he boasts, and vaunts, and brags of, and offers to bet upon, in the very spirit of the inimitable dialogue between Page and Shallow in the “Merry Wives of Windsor,” could no more run a course in their present condition than they could fly,—the hares would stand and laugh at them.

Mr. Lane is certainly a very happy person ; although, when

first he removed from the Butts, it was quite the fashion to bestow a great deal of pity on the poor rich man, self-condemned to idleness,—which pity was as much thrown away as pity for those who have the power to follow their own devices generally is. Our good neighbour is not the man to be idle. Besides going every day to the old shop, where his sons carry on the business, and he officiates *en amateur*, attending his old clubs, and pursuing his old diversions in Belford, he has his farm at Sunham to manage, (some five hundred acres of pasture and arable land, left him by his father-in-law,) and the whole parish to reform. He has already begun to institute inquiries into charity-schools and poor-rates, has an eye on the surveyor of highways, and a close watch on the overseer; he attends turnpike-meetings, and keeps a sharp look-out upon the tolls; and goes peeping about the workhouse with an anxiety to detect peculation that would do honour even to a radical member of the reformed House of Commons.

Moreover, he hath a competitor worthy of his powers in the shape of the village orator, Mr. Jacob Jones, a little whippersnapper of a gentleman farmer, with a shrill, cracked voice, and great activity of body, who, having had the advantage of studying some odds-and-ends of law, during a three years' residence in an attorney's office, has picked up therein a competent portion of technical jargon, together with a prodigious volubility of tongue, and a comfortable stock of impudence; and, under favour of these good gifts, hath led the village senate by the nose for the last dozen years. Now, Mr. Jacob Jones is, in his way, nearly as great a man as Mr. Lane; rides his bit of blood a fox-hunting with my lord; dines once a year with Sir John; and advocates abuses through thick and thin—he does not well know why—almost as stoutly as our good knight of the cleaver does battle for reform. These two champions are to be pitted against each other at the next vestry-meeting, and much interest is excited as to the event of the contest. I, for my part, think that Mr. Lane will carry the day. He is, in every way, a man of more substance; and Jacob Jones will no more be able to withstand “the momentum of his republican fist,” than a soldier of light infantry could stand the charge of a heavy dragoon. Stephen, honest man, will certainly add to his other avocations that of overseer of Sunham. Much good may it do him!

WILLIAM AND HANNAH.

“DON’T talk to me, William, of our having been asked in church. Don’t imagine that I mind what people may say about that. Let them attend to their own concerns, and leave me to manage mine. If this were our wedding morning, and I were within half an hour of being your wedded wife, I would part from you as readily as I throw away this rose-leaf, if I were to know for certain what I have heard to-day. Were you or were you not three times tipsy last week, at that most riotous and disorderly house, ‘The Eight Bells?’”

This searching question was put by the young and blooming Hannah Rowe, a nursery-maid in the family of General Maynard, of The Elms, to her accepted lover, William Curtis, a very fine young man, who followed his trade of a shoemaker in the good town of Belford. The courtship had, as the fair damsel’s words implied, approached as nearly as well could be to the point matrimonial; Hannah having given her good mistress warning, and prepared her simple wardrobe; and William, on his part, having taken and furnished a room—for to a whole house neither of them aspired—near his master’s shop: William, although a clever workman, and likely to do well, being as yet only a journeyman.

A finer couple it would be difficult to meet with any where, than William and his Hannah. He was tall, handsome, and intelligent, with a perpetual spring of good-humour, and a fund of that great gift of Heaven, high animal spirits, which being sustained by equal life of mind (for otherwise it is not a good gift), rendered him universally popular. She had a rich, sparkling, animated beauty—a warmth of manner and of feeling equally prepossessing. She loved William dearly, and William knew it. Perhaps he did not equally know that her quickness of temper was accompanied by a decision and firmness of character, which on any really essential point would not fail to put forth its strength. Such a point was this, as Hannah knew from woful experience: for her own father had been a frequenter of the alehouse—had ruined himself altogether, health, property, and character, by that degrading and ruinous propensity, and had finally died of sheer drunkenness,

leaving her mother a broken-hearted woman, and herself a child of eight years old, to struggle as best they might through the wide world. Well did Hannah remember her dear mother, and that dear mother's sufferings ;— how she would sit night after night awaiting the return of her brutal husband, bending silently and patiently over the needlework by which she endeavoured to support herself and her child ; and how, when he did return, when his reeling unsteady step was heard on the pavement, or his loud knock at the door, or the horrid laugh and frightful oath of intoxication in the street, how the poor wife would start and tremble, and strive to mould her quivering lips into a smile, and struggle against her tears, as he called fiercely for comforts which she had not to give, and thundered forth imprecations on herself and her harmless child. Once she remembered— she could not have been above five years old at the time, but she remembered it as if it had happened yesterday—awaking suddenly from sleep on her wretched bed, and seeing, by the dim moonlight that came in through the broken windows, her father in his drunken frenzy standing over and threatening to strangle her, whilst her mother, frantic with fear, tore him away, and had her arm broken in the struggle. This scene, and scenes like [this, passed through Hannah's mind, as she leant over the calm face of Mrs. Maynard's lovely infant who lay sleeping on her lap, and repeated in a low calm voice her former question to William — “ Were you not three times tipsy last week ? ”

“ Now, Hannah ! ” replied William, evasively, “ how can you be so cross and old-maidish ? If I did get a little merry, what was it but a joyful parting from bachelor friends, before beginning a steady married life ? What do you women know of such things ? What can you know ? and what can a young fellow do with himself when his work is over, if he is not to go to a public house ? We have not work now for above half a day—that is to say, not more work in a week than I could finish in three days ; and what, I should like to know am I to do with the remainder ? At the Eight Bells, say what you like of the place, there's good liquor and good company, a good fire in winter, a newspaper to read, and the news of the town to talk over. Does not your master himself go to his club every night of his life when he's in London ? And what—since you won't let me come above twice a-week to

see you—what would you have me do with the long evenings when *my* work is over?”

Hannah was a little posed at this question. Luckily, however, a present sent to her mistress by an old servant who had married a gardener, consisting of a fine basket of strawberries, another of peas, and a beautiful nosegay of pinks and roses, caught her eye as they lay on the table before her.

“Why not take a little plot of ground, and work in that of evenings, and raise vegetables and flowers? Any thing rather than the public house!”

William laughed outright.

“Where am I to get this plot of ground? tell me that, Hannah! You know that at present I am lodging with my aunt in Silver Street, who has only a little bricked yard; and when we move to our room in Newton Row, why the outlet there will not be so large as that table. This is all nonsense, as you well know. I am no gardener, but a merry shoemaker; and such as I am you have chosen me, and you must take me.”

“And you will not promise to give up the Eight Bells?” asked Hannah, imploringly.

“Promise—no”—hesitated William. “I dare say I should do as you like; but as to promising—it is *you* who have promised to take me ‘for better for worse,’” added he, tenderly: “surely you do not mean to deceive me?”

“Oh, William!” said Hannah, “it is you who would deceive me and yourself. I know what the public-house leads to; and suffer what I may, better suffer now and alone, than run the risk of *that* misery. Either promise to give up the Eight Bells, or, dearly as I love you, and far as things have gone, we must part,” added she, firmly.

And as William, though petitioning, remonstrating, coaxing, storming, and imploring, would not give the required pledge, part they did; his last speech denouncing a vengeance which she could ill bear.

“You will repent this, Hannah! for you have been the ruin of me. You have broken my heart; and if you hear of me every night at the alehouse, endeavouring to drown care, remember that it is you, and you only, who have driven me there!” And so saying, he walked sturdily out of the house.

William went away in wrath and anger, determined to be

as good, or rather as bad, as his word. Hannah remained, her heart overflowing with all the blended and contending emotions natural to a woman (I mean a woman that has a heart) in such a situation. Something of temper had mingled with the prudence of her resolution, and, as is always the case where a rash and hasty temper has led a generous mind astray, the reaction was proportionably strong. She blamed herself—she pitied William—she burst into a passion of tears ; and it was not until the violence of her grief had awakened and terrified the little Emily, and that the necessity of pacifying the astonished child compelled her into the exertion of calming herself, (so salutary in almost all cases is the recurrence of our daily duties !) that she remembered the real danger of William's unhappy propensity, the dying injunctions of her mother, and those fearful scenes of her own childhood which still at times haunted her dreams. Her father, she had heard, had once been as kind, as gay, as engaging as William himself—as fond of her mother as William was of her. Where was the security that these qualities would not perish under the same evil influence and degrading habits ? Her good mistress, too, praised and encouraged her, and for a while she was comforted.

Very, very soon the old feeling returned. Hannah had loved with the full and overflowing affection of a fond and faithful nature, and time and absence, which seldom fail to sweep away a slight and trivial fancy, only gave deeper root to an attachment like hers : her very heart clung to William. Her hours were passed in weaving visions of imaginary interviews, and framing to herself imaginary letters. She loved to plan fancied dialogues—to think how fondly he would woo, and how firmly she would reject—for she thought it quite sure that she should reject ; and yet she yearned (oh, how she yearned !) for the opportunity of accepting.

But such opportunity was far away. The first thing she heard of him was, that he was realizing his own prediction by pursuing a course of continued intemperance at the Eight Bells ; the next, that he was married !—married, it should seem, from hate and anger, not from love, to a young thoughtless girl, portionless and improvident as himself. Nothing but misery could ensue from such a union ;—nothing but misery did. Then came the beer-houses, with their fearful addition of temptation ; and Hannah, broken-hearted at the accounts of

his evil courses, and ashamed of the interest which she still continued to feel for one who could never be any thing to her again, rejoiced when General and Mrs. Maynard resolved to spend some time in Germany, and determined that she should accompany them.

From Germany the travellers proceeded to Italy, from Italy to Switzerland, and from Switzerland to France ; so that nearly five years elapsed before they returned to the Elms. Five years had wrought the usual changes amongst Hannah's old friends in that neighbourhood. The servants were nearly all new, the woman at the lodge had gone away, the keeper's daughter was married ; so that, finding none who knew her anxiety respecting William, and dreading to provoke the answer which she feared awaited her inquiries, she forbore to ask any question respecting her former lover.

One evening, soon after their arrival, General Maynard invited his wife and family to go and see the cottage-gardens at Belford. "We'll take even little Emily and Hannah," added he, "for it's a sight to do one's heart good—ay, fifty times more good than famous rivers and great mountains! and I would not have any of my children miss it for the fee-simple of the land, which, by the bye, happens to belong to me. You remember my friend Howard writing to me when I was at Mannheim, desiring to rent about thirty acres near Belford, which had just fallen vacant. Well, he has fenced it, and drained it, and made roads and paths, and divided it into plots of a quarter of an acre, more or less, and let it out, for exactly the same money which he gives me, to the poor families in the town, chiefly to the inhabitants of that wretched suburb Silver-street, where the miserable hovels had not an inch of outlet, and the children were constantly grovelling in the mud and running under the horses' feet, passing their whole days in increasing and progressive demoralisation ; whilst their mothers were scolding and quarrelling and starving, and their fathers drowning their miseries at the beer-shops—a realisation of Crabbe's gloomiest pictures! Only imagine what these gardens have done for these poor people! Every spare hour of the parents is given to the raising of vegetables for their own consumption, or for sale, or for the rearing and fattening that prime luxury of the English peasant, a pig. The children have healthy and pleasant employment. The artisan who can only

find work for two or three days in the week is saved from the parish ; he who has full pay is saved from the ale-house. A feeling of independence is generated, and the poor man's heart is gladdened and warmed by the conscious pride of property in the soil—by knowing and feeling that the spring shower and the summer sun are swelling and ripening his little harvest.

“ I speak ardently,” continued the general, rather ashamed of his own enthusiasm ; “ but I've just been talking with that noble fellow Howard, who in the midst of his many avocations has found time for all this, and really I cannot help it. Whilst I was with him, in came one of the good folks to complain that his garden was rated. ‘ I'm glad of it,’ replied Howard ; ‘ it's a proof that you are a real tenant, and that this is not a charity affair.’ And the man went off an inch taller. Howard confesses that he has not been able to resist the temptation of giving them back the amount of the rent in tools and rewards of one sort or other. He acknowledges that this is the weak part of his undertaking ; but, as I said just now, he could not help it. Moreover, I doubt if the giving back the rent in that form be wrong,—at least, if it be wrong to give it back at first. The working classes are apt to be suspicious of their superiors—I am afraid that they have sometimes had reason to be so ; and as the benefits of the system cannot be immediately experienced, it is well to throw in these little boons to stimulate them to perseverance. But here we are at Mr. Howard's,” pursued the good general, as the carriage stopped at the gate of the brewery ; for that admirable person was neither more nor less than a country brewer.

A beautiful place was that old-fashioned brewery, situated on an airy bit of rising ground at the outskirts of the town, the very last house in the borough, and divided from all other buildings by noble rows of elms, by its own spacious territory of orchard and meadow, and by the ample outlet, full of drays, and carts, and casks, and men, and horses, and all the life and motion of a great and flourishing business ; forming, by its extent and verdure, so striking a contrast to the usual dense and smoky atmosphere, the gloomy yet crowded appearance of a brewer's yard.

The dwelling-house, a most picturesque erection, with one end projecting so as to form two sides of a square, the date 1642 on the porch, and the whole front covered with choice

creepers, stood at some distance from the road ; and General Maynard and his lady hurried through it, as if knowing instinctively that on a fine summer evening Mrs. Howard's flower-garden was her drawing-room. What a flower-garden it was ! A sunny turfy knoll sloping down abruptly to a natural and never-failing spring, that divided it from a meadow, rising on the other side with nearly equal abruptness ; the steep descent dotted with flower-beds, rich, bright, fresh, and glowing, and the path that wound up the hill leading through a narrow stone gateway — an irregular arch overrun with luxuriant masses of the narrow-leaved white-veined ivy, which trailed its long pendant strings almost to the ground, into a dark and shadowy walk, running along the top of a wild precipitous bank, clothed partly with forest-trees, oak, and elm, and poplar — partly with the finest exotics, cedars, cypresses, and the rare and graceful snowdrop-tree, of such growth and beauty as are seldom seen in England, — and terminated by a root-house overhung by the branches of an immense acacia, now in the full glory of its white and fragrant blossoms, and so completely concealing all but the entrance of the old root-house, that it seemed as if that quiet retreat had no other roof than those bright leaves and tassel-like flowers.

Here they found Mrs. Howard, a sweet and smiling woman, lovelier in the rich glow of her matronly beauty than she had been a dozen years before as the fair Jane Dorset, the belle of the country side. Here sat Mrs. Howard, surrounded by a band of laughing rosy children ; and directed by her, and promising to return to the brewery to coffee, the general and his family proceeded by a private path to the cottage allotments.

Pleasant was the sight of those allotments to the right-minded and the kind, who love to contemplate order and regularity in the moral and physical world, and the cheerful and willing exertion of a well-directed and prosperous industry. It was a beautiful evening late in June, and the tenants and their families were nearly all assembled in their small territories, each of which was literally filled with useful vegetables in every variety and of every kind. Here was a little girl weeding an onion-bed, there a boy sticking French beans ; here a woman gathering herbs for a salad, there a man standing in proud and happy contemplation of a superb plot of

cauliflowers. Everywhere there was a hum of cheerful voices, as neighbour greeted neighbour, or the several families chatted amongst each other.

The general, who was warmly interested in the subject, and had just made himself master of the details, pointed out to Mrs. Maynard those persons to whom it had been most beneficial. "That man," said he, "who has, as you perceive, a double allotment, and who is digging with so much good-will, has ten children and a sickly wife, and yet has never been upon the parish for the last two years. That thin young man in the blue jacket is an out-door painter, and has been out of work these six weeks—(by the bye, Howard has just given him a job)—and all that time has been kept by his garden. And that fine-looking fellow who is filling a basket with peas, whilst the pretty little child at his side is gathering strawberries, is the one whom Howard prizes most, because he is a person of higher qualities—one who was redeemed from intolerable drunkenness, retrieved from sin and misery, by this occupation. He is a journeyman shoemaker—a young widower——"

Hannah heard no more—she had caught sight of William, and William had caught sight of her; and in an instant her hands were clasped in his, and they were gazing on each other with eyes full of love and joy, and of the blessed tears of a true and perfect reconciliation.

"Yes, Hannah!" said William, "I have sinned, and deeply; but I have suffered bitterly, and most earnestly have I repented. It is now eighteen months since I have entered a public-house, and never will I set foot in one again. Do you believe me, Hannah?"

"Do I!" exclaimed Hannah, with a fresh burst of tears; "oh, what should I be made of if I did not?"

"And here are the peas and the strawberries," said William, smiling; "and the pinks and the roses," added he, more tenderly, taking a nosegay from his lovely little girl, as Hannah stooped to caress her; "and the poor motherless child—my only child! she has no mother, Hannah—will you be one to her?"

"Will I!" again echoed Hannah; "oh, William, will I not?"

"Remember, I am still only a poor journeyman—I have no money," said William.

“ But I have,” replied Hannah.

“ And shall we not bless Mr. Howard,” continued he, as with his own Hannah on his arm, and his little girl holding by his hand, he followed Mrs. Maynard and the general,—
“ shall we not bless Mr. Howard, who rescued me from idleness and its besetting temptations, and gave me pleasant and profitable employment in the cottage-garden ? ”

Note.—The system on which the above story is founded, is happily no fiction ; and although generally appropriated to the agricultural labourer of the rural districts, it has, in more than one instance, been tried with eminent success amongst the poorer artisans in towns ; to whom, above all other classes, the power of emerging from the (in every sense) polluted atmosphere of their crowded lanes and courts must be invaluable.

The origin of the system is so little known, and seems to me at once so striking and so natural, that I cannot resist the temptation of relating it almost in the words in which it was told to me by one of the most strenuous and judicious supporters of the cottage allotments.

John Denson was a poor working man, an agricultural labourer, a peasant, who, finding his weekly wages inadequate to the support of his family, and shrinking from applying for relief to the parish, sought and obtained of the lord of the manor the permission to enclose a small plot of waste land, of which the value had hitherto been very trifling. By diligent cultivation he brought it to a state of great productiveness and fertility. This was afterwards sufficiently extended to enable him to keep a cow or two, to support his family in comfort and independence, and ultimately to purchase the fee-simple of the land. During the hours of relaxation, he educated himself sufficiently to enable him to relate clearly and correctly the result of his experience ; and feeling it his duty to endeavour to improve the condition of his fellow-labourers, by informing them of the advantages which he had derived from industrious and sober habits, and the cultivation of a small plot of ground, he published a pamphlet called “ The Peasant’s Warning Voice,” which, by attracting the attention of persons of humanity and influence, gave the first impulse to the system.

Amongst the earliest and most zealous of its supporters was Lord Braybrooke, to whom, next after John Denson (for that noble-minded peasant must always claim the first place), belongs the honour of promulgating extensively a plan replete with humanity and wisdom.

It was first carried into effect by his Lordship, several years ago, in the parish of Saffron Walden, a place then remarkable for misery and vice, but which is now conspicuous for the prosperity and good conduct of its poorer inhabitants. The paupers on the rates were very numerous (amounting, I believe, to 135), and are now comparatively few, and — which is of far more importance, since the reduction of the poor-rates is merely an incidental consequence of the system — the cases of crime at the Quarter Sessions have diminished in a similar proportion.

Since that period the cottage allotments have been tried in many parts of England, and always with success. Indeed, they can hardly fail, provided the soil be favourable to spade-husbandry, the rent not higher than that which would be demanded from a large occupier of land, the ground properly drained and fenced, and the labourers not encumbered with rules and regulations: for the main object being not merely to add to the physical comforts, but to raise the moral character of the working-classes, especial care should be taken to induce and cherish the feeling of independence, and to prove to them that they are considered as tenants paying rent, and not as almsmen receiving charity.

I am happy to add, that the Mr. Howard of this little story (that is not *quite* his name) does actually exist. He is an eminent brewer in a small town in our neighbourhood, and has also another great brewery near London; he has a large family of young children and orphan relations, is an active magistrate, a sportsman, a horticulturist, a musician, a cricketer; is celebrated for the most extensive and the most elegant hospitality; and yet, has found time, not only to establish the system in his own parish, but also to officiate as secretary to a society for the promotion of this good object throughout the county. Heaven grant it success! I, for my poor part, am thoroughly convinced, that if ever project were at once benevolent and rational, and practicable, and wise, it is this of the cottage allotments; and I can hardly refrain

from entreating my readers — especially my fair readers — to exert whatever power or influence they may possess in favour of a cause which has for its sole aim and end the putting down of vice and misery, and the diffusion of happiness and virtue.

THE CURATE OF ST. NICHOLAS'.

AMONGST the most generally beloved, not merely of the clergy, but of the whole population of Belford, as that population stood some thirty years ago, was my good old friend the curate of St. Nicholas'; and, in my mind, he had qualities that might both explain and justify his universal popularity.

Belford is at present singularly fortunate in the parochial clergy. Of the two vicars, whom I have the honour and the privilege of knowing, one confers upon the place the ennobling distinction of being the residence of a great poet; whilst both are not only, in the highest sense of that highest word, gentlemen, in birth, in education, in manners, and in mind, but eminently popular in the pulpit, and, as parish priests, not to be excelled, even amongst the generally excellent clergymen of the Church of England — a phrase, by the way, which just at this moment sounds so like a war-cry, that I cannot too quickly disclaim any intention of inflicting a political dissertation on the unwary reader. My design is simply to draw a faithful likeness of one of the most peaceable members of the establishment.

Of late years, there has been a prodigious change in the body clerical. The activity of the dissenters, the spread of education, and the immense increase of population, to say nothing of that "word of power," Reform, have combined to produce a stirring spirit of emulation amongst the younger clergy, which has quite changed the aspect of the profession. Heretofore, the "church militant" was the quietest and easiest of all vocations; and the most slender and lady-like young gentleman, the "mamma's darling" of a great family, whose lungs were too tender for the bar, and whose frame was too delicate for the army, might be sent with perfect comfort to the snug curacy of a neighbouring parish, to read Horace,

cultivate auriculas, christen, marry, and bury, about twice a quarter, and do duty once every Sunday. Now times are altered; prayers must be read and sermons preached twice a day at least, not forgetting lectures in Lent, and homilies at tide times; workhouses are to be visited; schools attended, boys and girls taught in the morning, and grown-up bumpkins in the evening; children are to be catechised; masters and mistresses looked after; hymn-books distributed; bibles given away; tract societies fostered amongst the zealous, and psalmody cultivated amongst the musical. In short, a curate, now-a-days, even a country curate, much more if his parish lie in a great town, has need of the lungs of a barrister in good practice, and the strength and activity of an officer of dragoons.

Now this is just as it ought to be. Nevertheless, I cannot help entertaining certain relentings in favour of the well-endowed churchman of the old school, round, indolent, and rubicund, at peace with himself and with all around him, who lives in quiet and plenty in his ample parsonage-house, dispensing with a liberal hand the superfluities of his hospitable table, regular and exact in his conduct, but not so precise as to refuse a Saturday night's rubber in his own person, or to condemn his parishioners for their game of cricket after service on Sunday afternoons; charitable in word and deed, tolerant, indulgent, kind, to the widest extent of that widest word; but, except in such wisdom (and it is of the best), no wiser than that eminent member of the church, Parson Adams. In a word, exactly such a man as my good old friend the rector of Hadley, *ci-devant* curate of St. Nicholas' in Belford, who has just passed the window in that venerable relique of antiquity, his one-horse chaise. Ah, we may see him still, through the budding leaves of the clustering China rose, as he is stopping to give a penny to poor lame Dinah Moore — stopping, and stooping his short round person with no small effort, that he may put it into her little hand, because the child would have some difficulty in picking it up, on account of her crutches. Yes, there he goes, rotund and rosy, “a tun of a man,” filling three parts of his roomy equipage; the shovel-hat with a rose in it, the very model of orthodoxy, overshadowing his white hairs and placid countenance; his little stunted foot-boy in a purple livery, driving a coach-horse as fat as his master; whilst

the old white terrier, fatter still — his pet terrier Venom, waddles after the chaise (of which the head is let down, in honour, I presume, of this bright April morning), much resembling in gait and aspect that other white waddling thing, a goose, if a goose were gifted with four legs.

There he goes, my venerable friend the reverend Josiah Singleton, rector of Hadley-cum-Doveton, in the county of Southampton, and vicar of Delworth, in the county of Surrey. There he goes, in whose youth tract societies and adult schools *were not*, but who yet has done as much good and as little harm in his generation, has formed as just and as useful a link between the rich and the poor, the landlord and the peasant, as ever did honour to religion and to human nature. Perhaps this is only saying, in other words, that, under any system, benevolence and single-mindedness will produce their proper effects.

I am not, however, going to preach a sermon over my worthy friend — long may it be before his funeral sermon is preached! or even to write his *éloge*, for *éloges* are dull things; and to sit down with the intention of being dull, — to set about the matter with malice prepense (howbeit the calamity may sometimes happen accidentally), I hold to be an unnecessary impertinence. I am only to give a slight sketch, a sort of bird's eye view of my reverend friend's life, which, by the way, has been, except in one single particular, so barren of incidents, that it might almost pass for one of those proverbially uneventful narratives, 'The Lives of the Poets.'

Fifty-six years ago, our portly rector — then, it may be presumed, a sleek and comely bachelor — left college, where he had passed through his examinations and taken his degrees with respectable mediocrity, and was ordained to the curacy of St. Nicholas' parish, in our market-town of Belford, where, by the recommendation of his vicar, Dr. Grampound, he fixed himself in the small but neat first-floor of a reduced widow gentlewoman, who endeavoured to eke out a small annuity by letting lodgings at eight shillings a-week, linen, china, plate, glass, and waiting included, and by keeping a toy-shop, of which the whole stock, fiddles, drums, balls, dolls, and shuttle-cocks, might be safely appraised at under eight pounds, including a stately rocking-horse, the poor widow's *cheval de bataille*, which had occupied one side of Mrs. Martin's shop

from the time of her setting up in business, and still continued to keep his station uncheapened by her thrifty customers.

There, by the advice of Dr. Grampound, did he place himself on his arrival at Belford; and there he continued for full thirty years, occupying the same first-floor; the sitting-room—a pleasant apartment, with one window (for the little toy-shop was a corner-house) abutting on the High Bridge, and the other on the Market Place—still, as at first, furnished with a Scotch carpet, cane chairs, a Pembroke table, and two hanging shelves, which seemed placed there less for their ostensible destination of holding books, sermons, and newspapers, than for the purpose of bobbing against the head of every unwary person who might happen to sit down near the wall; and the small chamber behind, with its tent bed and dimity furniture, its mahogany chest of drawers, one chair and no table; with the self-same spare, quiet, decent landlady, in her faded but well-preserved mourning gown, and the identical serving maiden, Peggy, a demure, civil, modest damsel, dwarfed as it should seem by constant curtseying, since from twelve years upwards she had not grown an inch. Except the clock of Time, which, however imperceptibly, does still keep moving, every thing about the little toy-shop in the Market Place of Belford was at a stand-still. The very tabby cat which lay basking on the hearth, might have passed for his progenitor of happy memory, who took his station there the night of Mr. Singleton's arrival; and the self-same hobby-horse still stood rocking opposite the counter, the admiration of every urchin who passed the door, and so completely the pride of the mistress of the domicile, that it is to be questioned—convenient as thirty shillings, lawful money of Great Britain, might sometimes have proved to Mrs. Martin—whether she would not have felt more reluctance than pleasure in parting with this, the prime ornament of her stock.

There, however, the rocking-horse remained; and there remained Mr. Singleton, gradually advancing from a personable youth to a portly middle-aged man; and obscure and untempting as the station of a curate in a country-town may appear, it is doubtful whether those thirty years of comparative poverty were not amongst the happiest of his easy and tranquil life.

Very happy they undoubtedly were. To say nothing of the comforts provided for him by his assiduous landlady and her civil domestic, both of whom felt all the value of their kind, orderly, and considerate inmate; especially as compared with the racketty recruiting officers and troublesome single gentlewomen who had generally occupied the first-floor; our curate was in prime favour with his vicar, Dr. Grampound, a stately pillar of divinity, rigidly orthodox in all matters of church and state, who having a stall in a distant cathedral, and another living by the sea-side, spent but little of his time at Belford, and had been so tormented by his three last curates — the first of whom was avowedly of whig politics, and more than suspected of Calvinistic religion; the second a fox-hunter, and the third a poet — that he was delighted to intrust his flock to a staid, sober youth of high-church and tory principles, who never mounted a horse in his life, and would hardly have trusted himself on Mrs. Martin's steed of wood; and whose genius, so far from carrying him into any flights of poesy, never went beyond that weekly process of sermon-making which, as the doctor observed, was all that a sound divine need know of authorship. Never was curate a greater favourite with his principal. He has even been heard to prophesy that the young man would be a bishop.

Amongst the parishioners, high and low, Josiah was no less a favourite. The poor felt his benevolence, his integrity, his piety, and his steady kindness; whilst the richer classes (for in the good town of Belford few were absolutely rich) were won by his unaffected good-nature, the most popular of all qualities. There was nothing shining about the man, no danger of his setting the Thames on fire, and the gentlemen liked him none the worse for that; but his chief friends and allies were the ladies — not the young ladies, (by whom, to say the truth, he was not so much courted, and whom, in return, he did not trouble himself to court,) but the discreet mammas and grandmammas, and maiden gentlewomen of a certain age, amongst whom he found himself considerably more valued and infinitely more at home.

Sooth to say, our staid, worthy, prudent, sober young man, had at no time of his life been endowed with the buoyant and mercurial spirit peculiar to youth. There was in him a considerable analogy between the mind and the body. Both were

heavy, sluggish, and slow. He was no strait-laced person either; he liked a joke in his own quiet way well enough; but as to encountering the quips, and cranks, and quiddities of a set of giddy girls, he could as soon have danced a cotillon. The gift was not in him. So with a wise instinct he stuck to their elders; called on them in the morning; drank tea with them at night; played whist, quadrille, cassino, backgammon, commerce, or lottery-tickets, as the party might require; told news and talked scandal as well as any woman of them all: accommodated a difference of four years' standing between the wife of the chief attorney and the sister of the principal physician; and was appealed to as absolute referee in a question of precedence between the widow of a post-captain and the lady of a colonel of volunteers, which had divided the whole gentility of the town into parties. In short, he was such a favourite in the female world, that when the ladies of Belford (on their husbands setting up a weekly card-club at the King's Arms) resolved to meet on the same night at each other's houses, Mr. Singleton was, by unanimous consent, the only gentleman admitted to the female coterie.

Happier man could hardly be, than the worthy Josiah in this fair company. At first, indeed, some slight interruptions to his comfort had offered themselves, in the shape of overtures matrimonial, from three mammas, two papas, one uncle, and (I grieve to say) one lady, an elderly young lady, a sort of dowager spinster in her own proper person, who, smitten with Mr. Singleton's excellent character, a small independence, besides his curacy in possession, and a trifling estate (much exaggerated by the gossip fame) in expectancy, and perhaps somewhat swayed by Dr. Grampond's magnificent prophecy, had, at the commencement of his career, respectively given him to understand that he might, if he chose, become more nearly related to them. This is a sort of dilemma which a well-bred man, and a man of humanity, (and our curate was both) usually feels to be tolerably embarrassing. Josiah, however, extricated himself with his usual straightforward simplicity. He said, and said truly, "that he considered matrimony a great comfort—that he had a respect for the state, and no disinclination to any of the ladies; but that he was a poor man, and could not afford so expensive a luxury." And with the exception of one mamma, who had nine unmarried daugh-

ters, and proposed waiting for a living, and the old young lady who had offered herself, and who kept her bed and threatened to die on his refusal, thus giving him the fright of having to bury his inamorata, and being haunted by her ghost—with these slight exceptions, every body took his answer in good part.

As he advanced in life, these sort of annoyances ceased—his staid sober deportment, ruddy countenance and portly person, giving him an air of being even older than he really was; so that he came to be considered as that privileged person, a confirmed old bachelor, the general beau of the female coterie, and the favourite marryer and christener of the town and neighbourhood. Nay, as years wore away, and he began to marry some whom he had christened, and to bury many whom he had married, even Dr. Grampond's prophecy ceased to be remembered, and he appeared to be as firmly rooted in Belford as St. Nicholas's church, and as completely fixed in the toy-shop as the rocking-horse.

Destiny, however, had other things in store for him. The good town of Belford, as I have already hinted, is, to its own misfortune, a poor place! an independent borough, and subject, accordingly, to the infliction (privilege, I believe, the voters are pleased to call it) of an election. For thirty years—during which period there had been seven or eight of these visitations—the calamity had passed over so mildly, that, except three or four days of intolerable drunkenness, (accompanied, of course, by a sufficient number of broken heads,) no other mischief had occurred; the two great families, whig and tory, who might be said to divide the town—for this was before the days of that active reformer Stephen Lane—having entered, by agreement, into a compromise to return one member each; a compact which might have held good to this time, had not some slackness of attention on the part of the whigs (the Buffs, as they were called in election jargon) provoked the Blue or tory part of the corporation, to sign a requisition to the Hon. Mr. Delworth, to stand as their second candidate, and produced the novelty of a sharp contest in their hitherto peaceful borough. When it came, it came with a vengeance. It lasted eight days—as long as it could last. The dregs of that cup of evil were drained to the very bottom. Words are faint to describe the tumult, the turmoil,

the blustering, the brawling, the abuse, the ill-will, the battles by tongue and by fist, of that disastrous time. At last the Blues carried it by six ; and on a petition and scrutiny in the House of Commons, by one single vote : and as Mr. Singleton had been engaged on the side of the winning party, not merely by his own political opinions, and those of his ancient vicar, Dr. Grampound, but also by the predilections of his female allies, who were Blues to a woman, those who understood the ordinary course of such matters were not greatly astonished, in the course of the ensuing three years, to find our good curate, rector of Hadley, vicar of Delworth, and chaplain to the new member's father. One thing, however, was remarkable, that, amidst all the scurrility and ill blood of an election contest, and in spite of the envy which is pretty sure to follow a sudden change of fortune, Mr. Singleton neither made an enemy nor lost a friend. His peaceful unoffending character disarmed offence. He had been unexpectedly useful too to the winning party, not merely by knowing and having served many of the poorer voters, but by possessing one eminent qualification not sufficiently valued or demanded in a canvasser : he was the best listener of the party, and is said to have gained the half-dozen votes which decided the election by the mere process of letting the people talk.

This talent, which, it is to be presumed, he acquired in the ladies' club at Belford, and which probably contributed to his popularity in that society, stood him in great stead in the aristocratic circle of Delworth Castle. The whole family was equally delighted and amused by his *bonhomie* and simplicity ; and he in return, captivated by their kindness, as well as grateful for their benefits, paid them a sincere and unfeigned homage, which trebled their good-will. Never was so honest and artless a courtier. There was something at once diverting and amiable in the ascendancy which every thing connected with his patron held over Mr. Singleton's imagination. Loyal subject as he unquestionably was, the king, queen, and royal family would have been as nothing in his eyes, compared with Lord and Lady Delworth and their illustrious offspring. He purchased a new peerage, which in the course of a few days opened involuntarily on the honoured page which contained an account of their genealogy ; his walls were hung with

ground-plans of Hadley House, elevations of Delworth Castle, maps of the estate, prints of the late and present lords, and of a judge of Queen Anne's reign, and of a bishop of George the Second's, worthies of the family ; he had, on his dining-room mantel-piece, models of two wings, once projected for Hadley, but which had never been built ; and is actually said to have bought an old head of the first Duke of Marlborough, which a cunning auctioneer had fobbed off upon him, by pretending that the great captain was a progenitor of his noble patron.

Besides this predominant taste, he soon began to indulge other inclinations at the rectory, which savoured a little of his old bachelor habits. He became a collector of shells and china, and a fancier of tulips ; and when he invited the coterie of Belford ladies to partake of a syllabub, astonished and delighted them by the performance of a piping bull-finch of his own teaching, who executed the Blue Bells of Scotland in a manner not to be surpassed by the barrel organ, by means of which this accomplished bird had been instructed. He set up the identical one-horse-chaise in which he was riding to-day ; became a member of the clerical dinner club ; took in the St. James's Chronicle and the Gentleman's Magazine ; and was set down by every body as a confirmed old bachelor.

All these indications notwithstanding, nothing was less in his contemplation than to remain in that forlorn condition. Marriage, after all, was his predominant taste ; his real fancy was for the ladies. He was fifty-seven, or thereabouts, when he began to make love ; but he has amply made up for his loss of time, by marrying no less than four wives since that period. Call him Mr. Singleton indeed !—why, his proper name would be Doubleton. Four wives has he had, and of all varieties. His first was a pretty rosy smiling lass just come from school, who had known him all her life, and seemed to look upon him just as a school-girl does upon an indulgent grandpapa, who comes to fetch her home for the holidays. She was as happy as a bird, poor thing ! during the three months she lived with him ; but then came a violent fever and carried her off.

His next wife was a pale, sickly, consumptive lady, not over young, for whose convenience he set up a carriage, and for whose health he travelled to Lisbon and Madeira, and Nice, and Florence, and Hastings, and Clifton, and all the places

by sea and land, abroad and at home, where sick people go to get well ; at one of which she, poor lady, died.

Then he espoused a buxom, jolly, merry widow, who had herself had two husbands, and who seemed likely to see him out ; but the smallpox came in her way, and she died also.

Then he married his present lady, a charming woman, neither fat nor thin, nor young nor old — not very healthy, nor particularly sickly — who makes him very happy, and seems to find her own happiness in making him so.

He has no children by any of his wives ; but has abundance of adherents in parlour and hall. Half the poor of the parish are occasionally to be found in his kitchen, and his dining-room is the seat of hospitality, not only to his old friends of the town and his new friends of the country, but to all the families of all his wives. He talks of them (for he talks more now than he did at the Belford election, having fallen into the gossiping habit of “ narrative old age ”) in the quietest manner possible, mixing, in a way the most diverting and the most unconscious, stories of his first wife and his second, of his present and his last. He seems to have been perfectly happy with all of them, especially with this. But if he should have the misfortune to lose that delightful person, he would certainly console himself, and prove his respect for the state, by marrying again ; and such is his reputation as a super-excellent husband, especially in the main article of giving his wives their own way, that, in spite of his being even now an octogenarian, I have no doubt but there would be abundance of fair candidates for the heart and hand of the good Rector of Hadley.

KING HARWOOD.

THE good town of Belford swarmed, of course, with single ladies — especially with single ladies of that despised denomination which is commonly known by the title of old maids. For gentlewomen of that description, especially of the less affluent class (and although such a thing may be found here and there a rich old maid is much rarer than a poor one), a

provincial town in this protestant country, where nunneries are not, is the natural refuge. A village life, however humble the dwelling, is at once more expensive — since messengers and conveyances, men and horses, of some sort, are in the actual country indispensable, — and more melancholy ; for there is a sense of loneliness and insignificance, a solitude within doors and without, which none but an unconnected and unprotected woman can thoroughly understand. And London, without family ties, or personal importance, or engrossing pursuit, — to be poor and elderly, idle and alone in London, is a climax of desolation which everybody can comprehend, because almost every one must, at some time or other have felt in a greater or less degree the humbling sense of individual nothingness — of being but a drop of water in the ocean, a particle of sand by the sea-shore, which so often presses upon the mind amidst the bustling crowds and the splendid gaieties of the great city. To be rich or to be busy is the necessity of London.

The poor and the idle, on the other hand, get on best in a country town. Belford was the paradise of ill-jointed widows and portionless old maids. There they met on the table-land of gentility, passing their mornings in calls at each other's houses, and their evenings in small tea-parties, seasoned with a rubber or a pool, and garnished with the little quiet gossiping (call it not scandal, gentle reader !) which their habits required. So large a portion of the population consisted of single ladies, that it might almost have been called a maiden town. Indeed, a calculating Cantab, happening to be there for the long vacation, amused his leisure by taking a census of the female householders, beginning with the Mrs. Davisons — fine alert old ladies, between seventy and eighty, who, being proud of their sprightliness and vigour, were suspected of adding a few more years to their age than would be borne out by the register, — and ending with Miss Letitia Pierce, a damsel on the confines of forty, who was more than suspected of a slight falsification of dates the converse way. I think he made the sum total, in the three parishes, amount to one hundred and seventy-four.

The part of the town in which they chiefly congregated, the ladies' *quartier*, was one hilly corner of the parish of St. Nicholas, a sort of highland district, all made up of short

rows, and pigmy places, and half-finished crescents, entirely uncontaminated by the vulgarity of shops, ill-paved, worse lighted, and so placed that it seemed to catch all the smoke of the more thickly inhabited part of the town, and was constantly encircled by a wreath of vapour, like Snowdon or Skiddaw.

Why the good ladies chose this elevated and inconvenient position, one can hardly tell; perhaps because it was cheap, perhaps because it was genteel—perhaps from a mixture of both causes; I can only answer for the fact: and of this favourite spot the most favoured portion was a slender line of houses, tall and slim, known by the name of Warwick Terrace, consisting of a tolerably spacious dwelling at either end, and four smaller tenements linked two by two in the centre.

The tenants of Warwick Terrace were, with one solitary exception, exclusively female. One of the end houses was occupied by a comfortable-looking, very round Miss Blackall, a spinster of fifty, the richest and the simplest of the row, with her parrot, who had certainly more words, and nearly as many ideas, as his mistress; her black footman, whose fine livery, white turned up with scarlet, and glittering with silver lace, seemed rather ashamed of his “sober-suited” neighbours; the plush waistcoat and inexpressibles blushing as if in scorn. The other corner was filled by Mrs. Leeson, a kind-hearted bustling dame, the great ends of whose existence were visiting and cards, who had probably made more morning calls and played a greater number of rubbers than any woman in Belford, and who boasted a tabby cat, and a head maid called Nanny, that formed a proper pendent to the parrot and Cæsar. Of the four centre habitations, one pair was the residence of Miss Savage, who bore the formidable reputation of a sensible woman—an accusation which rested probably on no worse foundation than a gruff voice and something of a vinegar aspect,—and of Miss Steele, who, poor thing! underwent a still worse calumny, and was called literary, simply because forty years ago she had made a grand poetical collection, consisting of divers manuscript volumes, written in an upright taper hand, and filled with such choice morceaus as Mrs. Greville’s “Ode to Indifference;” Miss Seward’s “Monody on Major André,” sundry translations of Metastasio’s “Nice,” and a considerable collection of Enigmas, on which stock, undimi-

nished and unincreased, she still traded ; whilst the last brace of houses, linked together like the Siamese twins, was divided between two families, the three Miss Lockes, — whom no one ever dreamt of talking of as separate or individual personages : one should as soon have thought of severing the Graces, or the Furies, or the Fates, or any other classical trio, as of knowing them apart : the three Miss Lockes lived in one of these houses, and Mrs. Harwood and her two daughters in the other.

It is with the Harwoods only that we have to do at present.

Mrs. Harwood was the widow of the late and the mother of the present rector of Dighton, a family-living purchased by the father of her late husband, who, himself a respectable and affluent yeoman, aspired to a rivalry with his old landlord, the squire of the next parish ; and, when he had sent his only son to the university, established him in the rectory, married him to the daughter of an archdeacon, and set up a public-house, called the Harwood Arms — somewhat to the profit of the Heralds' Office, who had to discover or to invent these illustrious bearings — had accomplished the two objects of his ambition, and died contented.

The son proved a bright pattern of posthumous duty ; exactly the sort of rector that the good old farmer would have wished to see, did he turn out — respectable, conscientious, always just, and often kind ; but so solemn, so pompous, so swelling in deportment and grandiloquent in speech, that he had not been half a dozen years' inducted in the living before he obtained the popular title of Bishop of Dighton — a distinction which he seems to have taken in good part, by assuming a costume as nearly episcopal as possible at all points, and copying, with the nicest accuracy, the shovel hat and buzz wig of the prelate of the diocese, a man of seventy-five. He put his coachman and footboy into the right clerical livery, and adjusted his household and modelled his behaviour according to his strictest notions of the stateliness and decorum proper to a dignitary of the church.

Perhaps he expected that the nickname by which he was so little aggrieved would some day or other be realised ; some professional advancement he certainly reckoned upon. But in spite of his cultivating most assiduously all profitable connections — of his christening his eldest son "Earl" after a friend of good parliamentary interest, and his younger boy

“King” after another — of his choosing one noble sponsor for his daughter Georgina, and another for his daughter Henrietta — he lived and died with no better preferment than the rectory of Dighton, which had been presented to him by his honest father five-and-forty years before, and to which his son Earl succeeded: the only advantage which his careful courting of patrons and patronage had procured for his family being comprised in his having obtained for his son King, through the recommendation of a noble friend, the situation of clerk at his banker’s in Lombard Street.

Mrs. Harwood, a stately portly dame, almost as full of parade as her husband, had on her part been equally unlucky. The grand object of her life had been to marry her daughters, and in that she had failed, probably because she had been too ambitious and too open in her attempts. Certain it is that, on the removal of the widow to Belford, poor Miss Harwood, who had been an insipid beauty, and whose beauty had turned into sallowness and haggardness, was forced to take refuge in ill health and tender spirits, and set up, as a last chance, for interesting; whilst Miss Henrietta, who had five-and-twenty years before reckoned herself accomplished, still, though with diminished pretensions, kept the field — sang with a voice considerably the worse for wear, danced as often as she could get a partner, and flirted with beaux of all ages, from sixty to sixteen — chiefly, it may be presumed, with the latter, because of all mankind a shy lad from college is the likeliest to be taken in by an elderly miss. A wretched personage, under an affectation of boisterous gaiety, was Henrietta Harwood! a miserable specimen of that most miserable class of single women who, at forty and upwards, go about dressing and talking like young girls, and will not grow old.

Earl Harwood was his father slightly modernised. He was a tall, fair, heavy-looking man, not perhaps quite so solemn and pompous as “the bishop,” but far more cold and supercilious. If I wished to define him in four letters, the little word “prig” would come very conveniently to my aid; and perhaps, in its compendious brevity, it conveys as accurate an idea of his manner as can be given: a prig of the slower and graver order was Earl Harwood.

His brother King, on the other hand, was a coxcomb of the brisker sort; *up* — not like generous champagne; but like

cider, or perry, or gooseberry-wine, or "the acid flash of soda-water;" or, perhaps, more still, like the slight froth that runs over the top of that abomination, a pot of porter, to which, by the way, together with the fellow abominations, snuff and cigars, he was inveterately addicted. Conceit and pretension, together with a dash of the worst because the finest vulgarity, that which thinks itself genteel, were the first and last of King Harwood. His very pace was an amble—a frisk, a skip, a strut, a prance—he could not walk; and he always stood on tiptoe, so that the heels of his shoes never wore out. The effect of this was, of course, to make him look less tall than he was; so that, being really a man of middle height, he passed for short. His figure was slight, his face fair, and usually adorned with a smile half supercilious and half self-satisfied, and set off by a pair of most conceited-looking spectacles. There is no greater atrocity than his who shows you glass for eyes, and, instead of opening wide those windows of the heart, fobs you off with a bit of senseless crystal which conceals, instead of enforcing, an honest meaning—"there was no speculation in those *pebbles* which he did glare withal." For the rest, he was duly whiskered and curled; though the eyelashes, when by a chance removal of the spectacles they were discovered, lying under suspicion of sandiness; and, the whiskers and hair being auburn, it was a disputed point whether the barber's part of him consisted in dyeing his actual locks, or in a supplemental periwig: that the curls were of their natural colour, nobody believed that took the trouble to think about it.

But it was his speech that was the prime distinction of King Harwood: the pert fops of Congreve's comedies, *Petulant*, *Witwoud*, *Froth*, and *Brisk* (pregnant names!) seemed but types of our hero. He never opened his lips (and he was always chattering) but to proclaim his own infinite superiority to all about him. He would have taught Burke to speak, and Reynolds to paint, and John Kemble to act. The *Waverley* novels would have been the better for his hints; and it was some pity that Shakspeare had not lived in these days, because he had a suggestion that would greatly have improved his *Lear*.

Nothing was too great for him to meddle with, and nothing too little; but his preference went very naturally with the

latter, which amalgamated most happily with his own mind : and when the unexpected legacy of a plebeian great-aunt, the despised sister of his grandfather the farmer, enabled him to leave quill-driving, of which he was heartily weary, and to descend from the high stool in Lombard Street, on which he had been perched for five-and-twenty years, there doubtless mingled with the desire to assist his family, by adding his small income to their still smaller one — for this egregious coxcomb was an excellent son and a kind brother, just in his dealings, and generous in his heart, when through the thick coating of foppery one could find the way to it—some wish to escape from the city, where his talents were, as he imagined, buried in the crowd, smothered amongst the jostling multitudes, and to emerge in all his lustre in the smaller and more select coteries of the country. On his arrival at Belford accordingly he installed himself at once as arbiter of fashion, the professed *beau garçon*, the lady's man of the town and neighbourhood ; and having purchased a horse, and ascertained, to his great comfort, that his avocation as a banker's clerk was either wholly unsuspected in the county circles which his late father had frequented, or so indistinctly known that the very least little white lie in the world would pass him off as belonging to the House, he boldly claimed acquaintance with everybody in the county whose name he had ever heard in his life, and, regardless of the tolerably visible contempt of the gentlemen, proceeded to make his court to the ladies with might and with main.

He miscalculated, however, the means best fitted to compass his end. Women, even though they chance to be frivolous themselves, do not like a frivolous man : they would as soon take a fancy to their mercer as to the gentleman who offers to choose their silks ; and if he will find fault with their embroidery, and correct their patterns, he must lay his account in being no more regarded by them than their milliner or their maid. Sooth to say, your fine lady is an ungrateful personage ; she accepts the help, and then laughs at the officious helper — sucks the orange and throws away the peel. This truth found King Harwood, when, after riding to London, and running all over that well-sized town to match in German lamb's wool the unmatched brown and gold feathers of the game-cock's neck, which that ambitious embroid-

eress Lady Delaney aspired to imitate in a table-carpet, he found himself saluted for his pains with the malicious sobriquet of king of the bantams. This and other affronts drove him from the county society, which he had intended to enlighten and adorn, to the less brilliant circles of Belford, which perhaps suited his taste better, he being of that class of persons who had rather reign in the town than serve in the country ; whilst his brother earl, safe in cold silence and dull respectability, kept sedulously amongst his rural compeers, and was considered one of the most unexceptionable grace-sayers at a great dinner of any clergyman in the neighbourhood.

To Belford, therefore, the poor king of the bantams was content to come, thinking himself by far the cleverest and most fashionable man in the place ; an opinion which, I am sorry to say, he had pretty much to himself. The gentlemen smiled at his pretensions, and the young ladies laughed, which was just the reverse of the impression which he intended to produce. How the thing happened I can hardly tell, for in general the young ladies of a country town are sufficiently susceptible to attention from a London man. Perhaps the man was not to their taste, as conceit finds few favourers ; or perhaps they disliked the kind of attention, which consisted rather in making perpetual demands on their admiration than in offering the tribute of his own : perhaps, also, the gentleman, who partook of the family fault, and would be young in spite of the register, was too old for them. However it befel, he was no favourite amongst the Belford belles.

Neither was he in very good odour with the mammas. He was too poor, too proud, too scornful, and a Harwood, in which name all the pretension of the world seemed gathered. Nay, he not only in his own person out-Harwooded Harwood, but was held accountable for not a few of the delinquencies of that obnoxious race, whose airs had much augmented since he had honoured Belford by his presence. Before his arrival, Miss Henrietta and her stately mamma had walked out, like the other ladies of the town, unattended : the king came, and they could not stir without being followed as their shadow by the poor little foot-boy, who formed the only serving-man of their establishment ; before that *avatar* they dined at six, now seven was the family hour : and whereas they were wont,

previously, to take that refecton without alarming their neighbours, and causing Miss Blackall's parrot to scream, and Mrs. Leeson's cat to mew, now the solitary maid of all-work, or perchance the king himself, tinkled and jangled the door-bell, or the parlour-bell, to tell those who knew it before that dinner was ready (I wonder he had not purchased a gong), and to set every lady in the terrace a moralizing on the sin of pride and the folly of pretension. Ah! if they who are at once poor and gently bred could but understand how safe a refuge from the contempt of the rich they would find in frank and open poverty! how entirely the pride of the world bends before a simple and honest humility! — how completely we, the poorest, may say with Constance (provided only that we imitate her action, and throw ourselves on the ground as we speak the words), “Here is my throne,—let kings come bow to it!” — if they would but do this, how much of pain and grief they might save themselves! But this was a truth which the Harwoods had yet to discover.

Much of his unpopularity might, however, be traced to a source on which he particularly prided himself:—a misfortune which has befallen many a wiser man.

Amongst his other iniquities the poor king of the bantams had a small genius for music, an accomplishment that flattered at once his propensities and his pretensions, his natural love of noise and his acquired love of consequence. He sung, with a falsetto that rang through one's head like the screams of a young peacock, divers popular ballads in various languages, very difficult to distinguish each from each; he was a most pertinacious and intolerable scraper on the violoncello, an instrument which it is almost as presumptuous to touch, unless finely, as it is to attempt and to fail in an epic poem or an historical picture; and he showed the extent and variety of his want of power, by playing quite as ill on the flute, which again may be compared to a failure in the composition of an acrostic, or the drawing of a butterfly. Sooth to say, he was equally bad in all; and yet he contrived to be quite as great a pest to the unmusical part of society — by far the larger part in Belford certainly, and, I suspect, every where—as if he had actually been the splendid performer he fancied himself. Nay, he was even a greater nuisance than a fine player can be; for if music be, as Charles Lamb happily calls it, “mea-

sured malice," malice out of all measure must be admitted to be worse still.

Generally speaking, people who dislike the art deserve to be as much bored as they are by the "concord of sweet sounds." There is not one English lady in a thousand who, when asked if she be fond of music, has courage enough to say, No! she thinks it would be rude to do so; whereas, in my opinion, it is a civil way of getting out of the scrape, since, if the performance be really such as commands admiration (and the very best music *is* an enjoyment as exquisite as it is rare), the delight evinced comes as a pleasant surprise, or as a graceful compliment; and if (as is by very far most probable) the singing chance to be such as one would rather not hear, why then one has, at least, the very great comfort of not being obliged to simper and profess oneself pleased, but may seem as tired, and look as likely to yawn as one will, without offering any particular affront, or incurring any worse imputation than that of being wholly without taste for music—a natural defect, at which the amateur who has been excruciating one's ears vents his contempt in a shrug of scornful pity, little suspecting how entirely (as is often the case with that amiable passion) the contempt is mutual.

Now there are certain cases under which the evil of music is much mitigated: when one is not expected to listen for instance, as at a large party in London, or, better still, at a great house in the country, where there are three or four rooms open, and one can get completely out of the way, and hear no more of the noise than of a peal of bells in the next parish. Music, under such circumstances, may be endured with becoming philosophy. But the poor Belfordians had no such resource. Their parties were held, at the best, in two small drawing-rooms laid into one by the aid of folding-doors; so that when Mr. King, accompanied by his sister Henrietta, who drummed and strummed upon the piano like a boarding-school Miss, and sung her part in a duet with a voice like a raven, began his eternal vocalization (for, never tired of hearing himself, he never dreamt of leaving off until his unhappy audience parted for the night)—when once the self-delighting pair began, the deafened whist-table groaned in dismay; lottery-tickets were at a discount; commerce at a stand-still;

Pope Joan died a natural death, and the pool of quadrille came to an untimely end.

The reign of the four kings, so long the mild and absolute sovereigns of the Belford parties, might be said to be over, and the good old ladies, long their peaceable and loving subjects, submitted with peevish patience to the yoke of the usurper. They listened and they yawned; joined in their grumbling by the other vocalists of this genteel society, the singing young ladies and manœuvring mammas, who found themselves literally "pushed from their stools," their music stools, by the Harwood monopoly of the instrument, as well as affronted by the bantam king's intolerance of all bad singing except his own. How long the usurpation would have lasted, how long the discontent would have been confined to hints and frowns, and whispered mutterings, and very intelligible inuendoes, without breaking into open rebellion—in other words, how long it would have been before King Harwood was sent to Coventry, there is no telling. He himself put an end to his musical sovereignty, as other ambitious rulers have done before him, by an overweening desire to add to the extent of his dominions.

Thus it fell out.

One of the associations which did the greatest honour to Belford, was a society of amateur musicians—chiefly tradesmen, imbued with a real love of the art, and a desire to extend and cultivate an amusement which, however one may laugh at the affectation of musical taste, is, when so pursued, of a very elevating and delightful character—who met frequently at each other's houses for the sake of practice, and, encouraged by the leadership of an accomplished violin player, and the possession of two or three voices of extraordinary brilliancy and power, began about this time to extend their plan, to rehearse two or three times a week at a great room belonging to one of the society, and to give amateur concerts at the Town-hall.

Very delightful these concerts were. Every man exerted himself to the utmost, and, accustomed to play the same pieces with the same associates, the performance had much of the unity which makes the charm of family music. They were so unaffected too, so thoroughly unpretending—there was such genuine good taste, so much of the true spirit of enjoy-

ment, and so little of trickery and display, that the audience, who went prepared to be indulgent, were enchanted; the amateur concerts became the fashion of the day, and all the elegance and beauty of the town and neighbourhood crowded to the Belford Town-hall. This was enough for Mr. King Harwood. He had attended once as a hearer, and he instantly determined to be heard. It was pretermittting his dignity, to be sure, and his brother, Earl, would have been dumb for ever before he would have condescended to such an association. But the vanity of our friend the king was of a more popular description. Rather than not get applause, he would have played Punch at Belford fair; accordingly he offered himself as a tenor singer to the amateur society, and they, won by his puffs of his musical genius—which, to say the truth, had about them the prevailing power which always results from the speaker's perfect faith in his own assertions, the self-deluding faith which has never failed to make converts, from Mahomet down to Joanna Southcot—they, won to belief, and civilly unwilling to put his talents to the proof, accepted his services for the next concert.

Luckless King Harwood! He to sing in concerted pieces! Could not he have remembered that unhappy supper of the Catch and Glee Club in Finsbury Square, where, for his sake, "Non Nobis, Domine," was hissed, and "Glorious Apollo" wellnigh damned? He to aspire to the dictatorship of country musicians! Had he wholly forgotten that still more unlucky morning, when, aspiring to reform the church music of Dighton, he and the parish clerk, and the obedient sexton, began, as announced and pre-arranged, to warble Luther's Hymn; whilst all the rest of the singing gallery, three clarionets, two French horns, the bassoon, and the rustic vocalists struck up the Hundredth Psalm; and the uninstructed charity children, catching the last word as given out by the clerk, completed the triple chain, not of harmony, but of discord, by screaming out at the top of their shrill childish voices the sweet sounds of the Morning Hymn? Was that day forgotten, and that day's mortification?—when my lord, a musical amateur of the first water, whom the innovation was intended to captivate, was fain to stop his cognoscentic ears, whilst Lady Julia held her handkerchief to her fair face to conceal her irrepressible laughter, and the unhappy source of this con-

fusion ran first of all to the Rectory to escape from the tittering remarks of the congregation, and then half-way to London to avoid the solemn rebuke of the rector? Could that hour be forgotten?

I suppose it was. Certainly he offered himself and was accepted; and was no sooner installed a member of the Society, than he began his usual course of dictation and finding fault. His first contest was that very fruitful ground of dispute, the concert bill. With the instrumental pieces he did not meddle; but in the vocal parts the Society had wisely confined themselves to English words and English composers, to the great horror of the new *primo tenore*, who proposed to substitute Spohr and Auber and Rossini, for Purcell and Harrington and Bishop, and to have "no vulgar English name" in the whole bill of fare.

"To think of the chap!" exclaimed our good friend Stephen Lane, when Master King proposed a quartet from the "Cenerentola," in lieu of the magnificent music which has wellnigh turned one of the finest tragedies in the world into the very finest opera — (I mean, of course, Matthew Locke's music in Macbeth — "To think of the chap!" exclaimed Stephen, who had sung Hecate with admirable power and beauty for nearly forty years, and whose noble bass voice still retained its unrivalled richness of tone — "To think of his wanting to frisk me into some of his parly-voo stuff, and daring to sneer and snigger not only at old Locke's music! — and I'll thank any of your parly-voos to show me finer — but at Shakspeare himself! I don't know much of poetry, to be sure," said Stephen; "but I know this, that Shakspeare's the poet of Old England, and that every Englishman's bound to stand up for him, as he is for his country or his religion; and, dang it, if that chap dares to fleer at him again before my face, I'll knock him down — and so you may tell him, Master Antony," pursued the worthy butcher, somewhat wrath against the leader, whose courtesy had admitted the offending party — "so you may tell him; and I tell you, that if I had not stood up all my life against the system, I'd strike, and leave you to get a bass where you could. I hate such puppies, and so you may tell him!" Thus saying, Stephen walked away, and the concert bill remained unaltered.

If (as is possible) there had been a latent hope that the new

member would take offence at his want of influence in the programme of the evening's amusement, and "strike" himself, the hope was disappointed. Most punctual in the orchestra was Mr. King Harwood, and most delighted to perceive a crowded and fashionable audience. He placed himself in a conspicuous situation and a most conspicuous attitude, and sat out first an overture of Weber's, then the fine old duet "Time has not thinned my flowing hair," and then the cause of quarrel, "When shall we three meet again," in which Stephen had insisted on his bearing no part, with scornful *sang-froid* — although the Hecate was so superb, and the whole performance so striking, that, as if to move his spleen, it had been rapturously encored. The next piece was "O Nanny!" harmonised for four voices, in which he was to bear a part — and a most conspicuous part he did bear, sure enough! The essence of that sweetest melody, which "custom cannot stale," is, as every one knows, its simplicity; but simplicity made no part of our vocalist's merits! No one that heard him will ever forget the trills, and runs and shakes, the cadences and flourishes, of that "O Nanny!" — The other three voices (one of which was Stephen's) stopped in astonishment, and the panting violins "toiled after him in vain." At last, Stephen Lane, somewhat provoked at having been put out of his own straightforward course by any thing, — for, as he said afterwards, he thought he could have sung "O Nanny!" in the midst of an earthquake, and determined to see if he could stop the chap's flourishes, — suddenly snatched the fiddlestick from the wondering leader, and jerked the printed glee out of the white-gloved hands of the singer, as he was holding the leaves with the most delicate affectation — sent them sailing and fluttering over the heads of the audience, and then, as the king, nothing daunted, continued his variations on "Thou wert fairest," followed up his blow by a dexterous twitch with the same convenient instrument at the poor beau's caxon, which flew spinning along the ceiling, and alighted at last on one of the ornaments of the centre chandelier, leaving the luckless vocalist with a short crop of reddish hair, slightly bald and somewhat grizzled, a fierce pair of whiskers curled and dyed, and a most chap-fallen countenance, in the midst of the cheers, the bravos, and the encores of the diverted audience, who

laughed at the exploit from the same resistless impulse that tempted honest Stephen to the act.

"Flesh and blood could not withstand it, man!" exclaimed he apologetically, holding out his huge red fist, which the crest-fallen beau was far too angry to take; "but I'm quite ready to make the wig good; I'll give you half-a-dozen, if you like, in return for the fun; and I'd recommend their fitting tighter, for really it's extraordinary what a little bit of a jerk sent that fellow flying up to the ceiling just like a bird. The fiddlestick's none the worse — nor you either, if you could but think so."

But in the midst of this consolatory and conciliatory harangue, the discomfited hero of the evening disappeared, leaving his "O Nanny!" under the feet of the company, and his periwig perched on the chandelier over their heads.

The result of this adventure was, in the first place, a most satisfactory settlement of the question of wig or no wig, which had divided the female world of Belford; and a complete cure of his musical mania on the part of its hero. He never sung a note again, and has even been known to wince at the sound of a barrel organ, whilst those little vehicles of fairy tunes, French work-boxes and snuff-boxes, were objects of his especial alarm. He always looked as if he expected to hear the sweet air of "O Nanny!" issuing from them.

One would have thought, that such a calamity would have been something of a lesson. But vanity is a strong-rooted plant that soon sprouts out again, crop it off as closely as you may, and the misadventure wrought but little change in his habits. For two or three days (probably whilst a new wig was making) he kept his room, sick or sulky; then he rode over to Dighton for two or three days more; after which he returned to Belford, revisited his old haunts and renewed his old ways, strutting and skipping as usual, the loudest at public meetings — the busiest on committees — the most philosophical member of the Philosophical Society, at which, by the way, adventuring with all the boldness of ignorance on certain chemical experiments, he very literally burnt his fingers; and the most horticultural of the horticulturalists, marching about in a blue apron, like a real gardener, flourishing watering-pots, cheapening budding-knives, and boasting of his marvels in grafting and pruning, although the only things resembling

trees in his mother's slip of a garden were some smoky China roses that would not blow, and a few blighted currants that refused to ripen.

But these were trifles. He attended all the more serious business of the town and county — was a constant man at the vestry, although no householder, and at borough and county meetings, although he had not a foot of land in the world. He attended rail-road meetings, navigation meetings, turnpike meetings, gas-work meetings, paving meetings, Macadamizing meetings, water-work meetings, cottage-allotment meetings, anti-slavetrade meetings, church missionary meetings, education meetings of every sort, and dissenting meetings of all denominations; never failed the bench; was as punctual at an inquest as the coroner, at the quarter-sessions as the chairman, at the assizes as the judge, and hath been oftener called to order by the court, and turned out of the grand-jury room by the foreman, than any other man in the county. In short, as Stephen Lane, whom he encountered pretty frequently in the course of his perambulations, pithily observed of him, "A body was sure to find the chap wherever he had no business."

Stephen, who probably thought he had given him punishment enough, regarded the poor king after the fashion in which his great dog Smoker would look upon a cur whom he had tossed once and disdained to toss again — a mixture of toleration and contempt. The utmost to which the good butcher was ever provoked by his adversary's noisiest nonsense or pertest presumption, was a significant nod towards the chandelier from whence the memorable wig had once hung pendent, a true escutcheon of pretence; or, if that memento were not sufficient, the whistling a few bars of "Where thou wert fairest," — a gentle hint, which seldom failed of its effect in perplexing and dumb-founding the orator.

They were, however, destined to another encounter; and, as so often happens in this world of shifting circumstance, the result of that encounter brought out points of character which entirely changed their feelings and position towards each other.

Stephen had been, as I have before said, or meant to say, a mighty cricketer in his time; and, although now many stone too heavy for active participation, continued as firmly attached

to the sport, as fond of looking on and promoting that most noble and truly English game, as your old cricketer, when of a hearty English character, is generally found to be. He patronised and promoted the diversion on all occasions, formed a weekly club at Belford for the sake of practice, assigned them a commodious meadow for a cricket-ground, trained up sons and grandsons to the exercise, made matches with all the parishes round, and was so sedulous in maintaining the credit of the Belford eleven, that not a lad came into the place as an apprentice, or a journeyman — especially if he happened to belong to a cricketing county — without Stephen's examining into his proficiency in his favourite accomplishment. Towards blacksmiths, who from the development of muscular power in the arms are often excellent batsmen, and millers, who are good players one scarcely knows why—it runs in the trade—his attention was particularly directed, and his researches were at last rewarded by the discovery of a first-rate cricketer, at a forge nearly opposite his own residence.

Caleb Hyde, the handicraftsman in question, was a spare, sinewy, half-starved looking young man, as ragged as the wildest colt he ever shod. Humphry Clinker was not in a more unclothed condition when he first shocked the eyes of Mrs. Tabitha Bramble; and, Stephen seeing that he was a capital ironsmith, and sure to command good wages, began to fear that his evil plight arose, as in nine cases out of ten raggedness does arise, from the gentle seductions of the beer-houses. On inquiry, however, he found that his protégé was as sober as if there were not a beer-house in the world; that he had been reduced to his present unseemly plight by a long fever; and that his only extravagance consisted in his having, ever since he was out of his apprenticeship, supported by the sweat of his brow an aged mother and a sickly sister, for whose maintenance, during his own tedious illness, he had pawned his clothes, rather than allow them to receive relief from the parish. This instance of affectionate independence won our butcher's heart.

“That's what I call acting like a man and an Englishman!” exclaimed honest Stephen. “I never had a mother to take care of,” continued he, pursuing the same train of thought—“that is, I never knew her; and an unnatural jade she must have been: but nobody belonging to me should ever have

received parish money whilst I had the use of my two hands ; — and this poor fellow must be seen to ! ”

And as an induction to the more considerable and more permanent benefits which he designed for him, he carried Caleb off to the cricket-ground, where there was a grand rendezvous of all the amateurs of the neighbourhood, beating up for recruits for a great match to come off at Danby-park on the succeeding week.

“ They give their players a guinea a day,” thought Stephen ; “ and I’d bet fifty guineas that Sir Thomas takes a fancy to him.”

Now, the Belford cricket-ground happened to be one of Mr. King Harwood’s many lounges. He never, to be sure, condescended to play there ; but it was an excellent opportunity to find fault with those that did, to lay down the law on disputed points, to talk familiarly of the great men at Lord’s, and to boast how in one match, on that classic ground, he had got more notches than Mr. Ward, had caught out Mr. Budd, and bowled out Lord Frederick. Any body, to have heard him, would have thought him in his single person able to beat a whole eleven. That marquee on the Belford cricket-ground was the place to see King Harwood in his glory.

There he was, on the afternoon in question, putting in his word on all occasions ; a word of more importance than usual, because, Sir Thomas being himself unable to attend, his steward, whom he had sent to select the auxiliaries for the great match, was rather more inclined than his master would have been to listen to his suggestions (a circumstance which may be easily accounted for by the fact, that the one did know him, and the other did not), and therefore in more danger of being prejudiced by his scornful disdain of poor Caleb, towards whom he had taken a violent aversion, first as a protégé of Mr. Lane’s, and secondly as being very literally an “ unwashed artificer,” Stephen having carried him off from the forge without even permitting the indispensable ablutions, or the slight improvement in costume which his scanty wardrobe would have permitted.

“ He would be a disgrace to your eleven, Mr. Miller ! ” said his bantamic majesty to the civil steward ; “ Sir Thomas

would have to "clothe him from top to toe. There's the cricketer that I should recommend," added he, pointing to a young linendraper, in nankeen shorts, light shoes, and silk stockings. "He understands the proper costume, and is, in my mind, a far prettier player. Out!" shouted "the skipping king," as Caleb, running a little too hard, saved himself from being stumped out by throwing himself down at full length, with his arm extended, and the end of his bat full two inches beyond the stride; "Out! fairly out!"

"No out!" vociferated the butcher; "it's a thing done every day. He's not out, and you are!" exclaimed the man of the cleaver.

But the cry of "out" having once been raised, the other side, especially the scout who had picked up and tossed the ball, and the wicket-keeper who had caught it from the scout, and the bowler — a dogged surly old player, whom Caleb's batting had teased not a little — joined in the clamour; and forthwith a confusion and a din of tongues, like that of the Tower of Babel, arose amongst cricketers and standers by; from the midst of which might be heard at intervals, "Lord's Ground," "Howard," "Mr. Ward," "Mr. Budd," "Lord Frederick," and "The Marybone club," in the positive dogmatical dictatorial tones of Mr. King Harwood; and the apparently irrelevant question, "O Nanny, wilt thou gang with me?" sung in his deep and powerful baritone voice by Stephen Lane.

At last, from mere weariness, there was a pause in the uproar; and our honest butcher, wiping his fine broad manly face, exclaimed, half in soliloquy,

"To be sure, it's foolish enough to make such a squabbling at a mere practising bout amongst ourselves; but one can't help being aggravated to hear a chap, who sits there never touching a bat, lay down the law as if he could beat all England; whereas it's my firm opinion that he never played in a match in his life. If he had, he'd want to play now. I defy a man that has been a cricketer not to feel a yearning, like, after the game when it's going on before his eyes; and I would not mind laying a smartish wager that his playing is just as bad as his singing."

"I'll play any man for thirty pounds, the best of two innings, at single wicket!" replied King, producing the money.

"Done," replied Stephen; "and Caleb, here, shall be your man."

"Surely, Mr. Lane," responded the affronted beau, "you can't intend to match me with a dirty ragged fellow like that? Of course I expect something like equality in my opponent—some decent person. No one could expect me to play against a journeyman blacksmith."

"Why not?" demanded the undaunted radical; "we're all the same flesh and blood, whether clean or dirty—all sprung from Adam. And as to Caleb, poor fellow! who pawned his clothes to keep his old mother and his sick sister, I only wish we were all as good. Howsomever, as that match would be, as you say, rather unequal—for I'll be bound that he'd beat you with his right hand tied behind him—why, it would not be fair to put him against you. Here's my little grandson Gregory, who won't be ten years old till next Martinmas—he shall play you; or, dang it, man," shouted Stephen, "I'll play you myself! I have not taken a bat in hand these twenty years," continued he, beginning, in spite of the remonstrances of his friends, especially of poor Caleb, to strip off his coat and waistcoat, and prepare for the encounter,—"I have not touched bat or ball for these twenty years, but I'm as sure of beating that chap as if he was a woman. So hold your tongue, Peter Jenkins! be quiet, Caleb! Don't you prate about your grandmother, Gregory; for play I will. And get you ready, Master Harwood, for I mean to bowl you out at the first ball."

And Master King did make ready accordingly; tied one handkerchief round the knee of his white trousers and another round his waist, lamented the want of his nankeens and his cricketing pumps, poised the bats, found fault with the ball, and finally placed himself in attitude at the wicket; and having won the toss, prepared to receive the ball, which Stephen on his part was preparing very deliberately to deliver.

Stephen in his time had been an excellent fast bowler; and as that power was not affected by his size (though probably somewhat impaired by want of practice), and his confidence in his adversary's bad play was much increased by the manner in which he stood at his wicket, he calculated with the most comfortable certainty on getting him out whenever he liked; and he was right; the unlucky King could neither stop nor

strike. He kept no guard over his wicket; and in less than three minutes the stumps rattled without his having once hit the ball.

It was now Stephen's turn to go in — the fattest cricketer of a surety that ever wielded bat. He stood up to his wicket like a man; and considering that King's bowling was soon seen to be as bad as his hitting — that is to say, as bad as anything could be — there was every chance of his stopping the ball, and continuing in for three hours; but whether he would get a notch in three days, whether dear Stephen Lane *could* run, was a problem. It *was* solved, however, and sooner than might have been expected. He gave a mighty hit — a hit that sent her (the cricket ball) spinning into the hedge at the bottom of the ground — a hit of which any body else would have made three even at single wicket; and, setting out on a leisurely long-trot, contrived to get home, without much inconvenience, just before the panting King arrived at his ground. In his next attempt at running, he was not so fortunate: his antagonist reached the wicket whilst he was still in mid-career, so that his innings was over, and Mr. King Harwood had to go in against one.

Alas! he found it one too many! At the very second ball he made a hit — his first hit — and unluckily a hit up, and Stephen caught him out by the mere exertion of lifting his right arm; so that the match was won at a single innings, the account standing thus: —

King Harwood, first innings	-	-	0
Ditto second innings	-	-	0
Stephen Lane, first innings	-	-	1

It would have been difficult to give the scorers on both sides less trouble.

Stephen was charmed with his success, laughing like a child for very glee, tossing the ball into the air, and enjoying his triumph with unrestrained delight, until his antagonist, who had borne his defeat with much equanimity, approached him with the amount of his bet: it then seemed to strike him suddenly that Mr. Harwood was a gentleman, and poor, and that thirty pounds was too much for him to lose.

"No, no, sir," said Stephen, gently putting aside the offered notes; "all's right now: we've had our frolic out, and it's over. 'Twas foolish enough, at the best, in an old

man like me, and so my dame will say; but as to playing for money, that's quite entirely out of the question."

"These notes are yours, Mr. Lane," replied King Harwood gravely.

"No such thing, man," rejoined Stephen, more earnestly; "I never play for money, except now and then a sixpenny game at all-fours with Peter Jenkins there. I hate gambling. We've all of us plenty to do with our bank-notes, without wasting them in such tom-foolery. Put 'em up, man, do. Keep 'em till we play the return match, and that won't be in a hurry, I promise you; I've had enough of the sport for one while," added Stephen, wiping his honest face, and preparing to reassume his coat and waistcoat; "put up the notes, man, can't ye!"

"As I said before, Mr. Lane, this money is yours. You need not scruple taking it; for though I am a poor man, I do not owe a farthing in the world. The loss will occasion me no inconvenience. I had merely put aside this sum to pay Charles Wither the difference between my bay mare and his chestnut horse; and now I shall keep the mare; and perhaps, after all, she is the more useful roadster of the two. You *must* take the money."

"I'll be hanged if I do!" exclaimed Stephen, struck with sudden and unexpected respect by the frank avowal of poverty, the good principles, and the good temper of this speech. "How can I? Wasn't it my own rule, when I gave this bit of ground to the cricketers, that nobody should ever play in it for any stake, high or low? A pretty thing it would be if I, a reformer of forty years' standing, should be the first man to break a law of my own making! Besides, 'tis setting a bad example to these youngsters, and ought not to be done—and sha'nt be done," continued Stephen, waxing positive. "You've no notion what an obstinate old chap I can be! Better let me have my own way."

"Provided you let me have mine. You say that you cannot take these notes—I feel that I cannot keep them. Suppose we make them over to your friend Caleb, to repair his wardrobe?"

"Dang it, you are a real good fellow!" shouted Stephen in an ecstasy, grasping King Harwood's hand, and shaking it as if he would shake it off; "a capital fellow! a true-born

Englishman ! and I beg your pardon from my soul for that trick of the wig and all my flouting and fleering before and since. You've taught me a lesson that I shan't forget in a hurry. Your heart's in the right place ; and when that's the case, why a little finery and nonsense signifies no more than the patches upon Caleb's jacket, or the spots on a bullock's hide, just skin-deep, and hardly that. I've a respect for you, man ! and I beg your pardon over and over." And again and again he wrung King Harwood's hand in his huge red fist ; whilst borne away by his honest fervency, King returned the pressure and walked silently home, wondering a little at his own gratification, for a chord had been struck in his bosom that had seldom vibrated before, and the sensation was as new as it was delightful.

The next morning little Gregory Lane made his appearance at Warwick Terrace, mounted on Mr. Charles Wither's beautiful chestnut.

"Grandfather sends his duty, sir," said the smiling boy, jumping down, and putting the bridle into King Harwood's hand, "and says that you had your way yesterday, and that he must have his to-day. He's as quiet as a lamb," added the boy, already, like Harry Blount in Marmion, a "sworn horse-courser ;" "and such a trotter ! He'll carry you twelve miles an hour with ease." And King Harwood accepted the offering ; and Stephen and he were good friends ever after.

THE CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER.

OF all living objects, children, out of doors, seem to me the most interesting to a lover of nature. In a room, I may, perhaps, be allowed to exercise my privilege as an old maid, by confessing that they are in my eyes less engaging. If well-behaved, the poor little things seem constrained and *gênés* — if ill-conducted, the *gêne* is transferred to the unfortunate grown-up people, whom their noise distracts and their questions interrupt. Within doors, in short, I am one of the many persons who like children in their places, that is to say,

in any place where I am not. But out of doors there is no such limitation: from the gipsy urchins under a hedge, to the little lords and ladies in a ducal demesne, they are charming to look at, to watch, and to listen to. Dogs are less amusing, flowers are less beautiful, trees themselves are less picturesque.

I cannot even mention them without recalling to my mind twenty groups or single figures, of which Gainsborough would have made at once a picture and a story. The little aristocratic-looking girl, for instance, of some five or six years old, whom I used to see two years ago, every morning at breakfast-time, tripping along the most romantic street in England (the High Street in Oxford), attended, or escorted, it is doubtful which, by a superb Newfoundland dog, curly and black, carrying in his huge mouth her tiny workbag, or her fairy parasol, and guarding with so true a fidelity his pretty young lady, whilst she, on her part, queened it over her lordly subject with such diverting gravity, seeming to guide him whilst he guided her — led, whilst she thought herself leading, and finally deposited at her daily school, with as much regularity as the same sagacious quadruped would have displayed in carrying his master's glove, or fetching a stick out of the water. How I should like to see a portrait of that fair demure elegant child, with her full short frock, her frilled trousers, and her blue kid shoes, threading her way, by the aid of her sable attendant, through the many small impediments of the crowded streets of Oxford!

Or the pretty scene of childish distress which I saw last winter on my way to East Court, — a distress which told its own story as completely as the picture of the broken pitcher! Driving rapidly along the beautiful road from Eversley Bridge to Finchamstead, up hill and down; on the one side a wide shelving bank, dotted with fine old oaks and beeches, intermingled with thorn and birch, and magnificent holly, and edging into Mr. Palmer's forest-like woods; on the other, an open hilly country, studded with large single trees. In the midst of this landscape, rich and lovely even in winter, in the very middle of the road, stood two poor cottage children, a year or two younger than the damsel of Oxford; a large basket dangling from the hand of one of them, and a heap of barley-meal — the barley-meal that should have been in the basket — the week's dinner of the pig, scattered in the dirt at

their feet. Poor little dears, how they cried ! They could not have told their story, had not their story told itself ; — they had been carrying the basket between them, and somehow it had slipped. A shilling remedied that disaster, and sent away all parties smiling and content.

Then again, this very afternoon, the squabbles of those ragged urchins at cricket on the common — a disputed point of *out* or *not out* ? The eight-year-old boy who will not leave his wicket ; the seven and nine-year-old imps who are trying to force him from his post ; the wrangling partisans of all ages, from ten downwards, the two contending *sides*, who are brawling for victory ; the grave, ragged umpire, a lad of twelve, with a stick under his arm, who is solemnly listening to the cause ; and the younger and less interested spectators, some just breeched, and others still condemned to the ignominious petticoat, who are sitting on the bank, and wondering which party will carry the day !

What can be prettier than this, unless it be the fellow-group of girls — sisters, I presume, to the boys — who are laughing and screaming round the great oak ; then darting to and fro, in a game compounded of hide-and-seek and baseball. Now tossing the ball high, high amidst the branches ; now flinging it low along the common, bowling, as it were, almost within reach of the cricketers ; now pursuing, now retreating, running, jumping, shouting, bawling — almost shrieking with ecstasy ; whilst one sunburnt black-eyed gipsy throws forth her laughing face from behind the trunk of the old oak, and then flings a newer and a gayer ball — fortunate purchase of some hoarded sixpence — amongst her admiring playmates. Happy, happy children ! that one hour of innocent enjoyment is worth an age !

It was, perhaps, my love of picturesque children that first attracted my attention towards a little maiden of some six or seven years old, whom I used to meet, sometimes going to school, and sometimes returning from it, during a casual residence of a week or two some fifteen years ago in our good town of Belford. It was a very complete specimen of childish beauty ; what would be called a picture of a child, — the very study for a painter ; with the round, fair, rosy face, coloured like the apple-blossom ; the large, bright, open blue eyes ; the broad white forehead, shaded by brown, clustering curls, and

the lips scarlet as winter berries. But it was the expression of that blooming countenance which formed its principal charm ; every look was a smile, and a smile which had in it as much of sweetness as of gaiety. She seemed, and she was, the happiest and the most affectionate of created beings. Her dress was singularly becoming. A little straw bonnet, of a shape calculated not to conceal, but to display the young pretty face, and a full short frock of gentianella blue, which served, by its brilliant yet contrasted colouring, to enhance the brightness of that brightest complexion. Tripping along to school with her neat covered basket in her chubby hand, the little lass was perfect.

I could not help looking and admiring, and stopping to look ; and the pretty child stopped too, and dropped her little curtsy ; and then I spoke, and then she spoke, — for she was too innocent, too unfearing, too modest to be shy ; so that Susy and I soon became acquainted ; and in a very few days the acquaintanceship was extended to a fine open-countenanced man, and a sweet-looking and intelligent young woman, Susan's father and mother, — one or other of whom used to come almost every evening to meet their darling on her return from school ; for she was an only one, — the sole offspring of a marriage of love, which was, I believe, reckoned unfortunate by everybody except the parties concerned : they felt and knew that they were happy.

I soon learnt their simple history. Thomas Jervis, the only son of a rich carpenter, had been attached, almost from childhood, to his fair neighbour, Mary Price, the daughter of a haberdasher in a great way of business, who lived in the same street. The carpenter, a plodding, frugal artisan of the old school, who trusted to indefatigable industry and undeviating sobriety for getting on in life, had an instinctive mistrust of the more dashing and speculative tradesman, and even, in the height of his prosperity, looked with cold and doubtful eyes on his son's engagement. Mr. Price's circumstances, however, seemed, and at the time were, so flourishing — his offers so liberal, and his daughter's character so excellent, that to refuse his consent would have been an unwarrantable stretch of authority. All that our prudent carpenter could do was, to delay the union, in hopes that something might still occur to break it off ; and when, ten days before the time finally fixed for the

marriage, the result of an unsuccessful speculation placed Mr. Price's name in the Gazette, most heartily did he congratulate himself on the foresight which, as he hoped, had saved him from the calamity of a portionless daughter-in-law. He had, however, miscalculated the strength of his son's affection for poor Mary, as well as the firm principle of honour which regarded their long and every-way sanctioned engagement as a bond little less sacred than wedlock itself; and on Mr. Price's dying, within a very few months, of that death which, although not included in the bills of mortality, is yet but too truly recognised by the popular phrase, a broken heart, Thomas Jervis, after vainly trying every mode of appeal to his obdurate father, married the orphan girl—in the desperate hope, that the step being once taken, and past all remedy, an only child would find forgiveness for an offence attended by so many extenuating circumstances.

But here, too, Thomas, in his turn, miscalculated the invincible obstinacy of his father's character. He ordered his son from his house and his presence, dismissed him from his employment, forbade his very name to be mentioned in his hearing, and, up to the time at which our story begins, comported himself exactly as if he never had had a child.

Thomas, a dutiful, affectionate son, felt severely the deprivation of his father's affection, and Mary felt for her Thomas; but, so far as regarded their worldly concerns, I am almost afraid to say how little they regretted their change of prospects. Young, healthy, active, wrapt up in each other and in their lovely little girl, they found small difficulty and no hardship in earning—he by his trade, at which he was so good a workman as always to command high wages, and she by needlework—sufficient to supply their humble wants; and when the kindness of Walter Price, Mary's brother, who had again opened a shop in the town, enabled them to send their little Susy to a school of a better order than their own funds would have permitted, their utmost ambition seemed gratified.

So far was speedily made known to me. I discovered also that Mrs. Jervis possessed, in a remarkable degree, the rare quality called taste—a faculty which does really appear to be almost intuitive in some minds, let metaphysicians laugh as they may; and the ladies of Belford, delighted to find an opportunity of at once exercising their benevolence, and pro-

curing exquisitely-fancied caps and bonnets at half the cost which they had been accustomed to pay to the fine yet vulgar milliner who had hitherto ruled despotically over the fashions of the place, did not fail to rescue their new and interesting protégée from the drudgery of sewing white seam, and of poring over stitching and button-holes.

For some years, all prospered in their little household. Susy grew in stature and in beauty, retaining the same look of intelligence and sweetness which had in her early childhood fascinated all beholders. She ran some risk of being spoilt, (only that, luckily, she was of the grateful, unselfish, affectionate nature which seems unspoilable,) by the admiration of Mrs. Jervis's customers, who, whenever she took home their work, would send for the pretty Susan into the parlour, and give her fruit and sweetmeats, or whatever cates might be likely to please a childish appetite; which, it was observed, she contrived, whenever she could do so without offence, to carry home to her mother, whose health, always delicate, had lately appeared more than usually precarious. Even her stern grandfather, now become a master-builder, and one of the richest tradesmen in the town, had been remarked to look long and wistfully on the lovely little girl, as, holding by her father's hand, she tripped lightly to church, although, on that father himself, he never deigned to cast a glance; so that the more acute denizens of Belford used to prognosticate that, although Thomas was disinherited, Mr. Jervis's property would not go out of the family.

So matters continued awhile. Susan was eleven years old, when a stunning and unexpected blow fell upon them all. Walter Price, her kind uncle, who had hitherto seemed as prudent as he was prosperous, became involved in the stoppage of a great Glasgow house, and was obliged to leave the town; whilst her father, having unfortunately accepted bills drawn by him, under an assurance that they should be provided for long before they became due, was thrown into prison for the amount. There was, indeed, a distant hope that the affairs of the Glasgow house might come round, or, at least, that Walter Price's concerns might be disentangled from theirs; and, for this purpose, his presence, as a man full of activity and intelligence, was absolutely necessary in Scotland: but this prospect was precarious and distant. In the mean time,

Thomas Jervis lay lingering in prison, his creditor relying avowedly on the chance that a rich father could not, for shame, allow his son to perish there; whilst Mary, sick, helpless, and desolate, was too broken-spirited to venture an application to a quarter, from whence any slight hope that she might otherwise have entertained was entirely banished by the recollection that the penalty had been incurred through a relation of her own.

“Why should I go to him?” said poor Mary to herself, when referred by Mr. Barnard, her husband’s creditor, to her wealthy father-in-law — “why trouble him? He will never pay my brother’s debt: he would only turn me from his door, and, perhaps, speak of Walter and Thomas in a way that would break my heart.” And, with her little daughter in her hand, she walked slowly back to a small room that she had hired near the gaol, and sat down sadly and heavily to the daily diminishing millinery work, which was now the only resource of the once happy family.

In the afternoon of the same day, as old Mr. Jervis was seated in a little summer-house at the end of his neat garden, gravely smoking his pipe over a tumbler of spirits and water, defiling the delicious odour of his honeysuckles and sweet-briars by the two most atrocious smells on this earth — the fumes of tobacco* and of gin — his meditations, probably none of the most agreeable, were interrupted, first by a modest single knock at the front-door, (which, the intermediate doors being open, he heard distinctly,) then by a gentle parley, and, lastly, by his old housekeeper’s advance up the gravel walk, followed by a very young girl, who approached him hastily yet tremblingly, caught his rough hand with her little one, lifted up a sweet face, where smiles seemed breaking through her tears, and, in an attitude between standing and kneeling — an attitude of deep reverence — faltered, in a low, broken voice, one low, broken word — “Grandfather!”

“How came this child here?” exclaimed Mr. Jervis, endeavouring to disengage the hand which Susan had now secured within both hers — “how dared you let her in, Norris, when you knew my orders respecting the whole family?”

* Whenever one thinks of Sir Walter Raleigh as the importer of this disgusting and noisome weed, it tends greatly to mitigate the horror which one feels for his unjust execution. Had he been only beheaded as the inventor of smoking, all would have been right.

“How dared I let her in?” returned the housekeeper — “how could I help it? Don’t we all know that there is not a single house in the town where little Susan (Heaven bless her dear face!) is not welcome! Don’t the very gaolers let her into the prison before hours and after hours? And don’t the sheriff himself, for as strict as he is said to be, sanction it? Speak to your grandfather, Susy love — don’t be dashed.”* And, with this encouraging exhortation, the kind-hearted housekeeper retired.

Susan continued clasping her grandfather’s hand, and leaning her face over it as if to conceal the tears which poured down her cheeks like rain.

“What do you want with me, child?” at length interrupted Mr. Jervis in a stern voice. “What brought you here?”

“Oh, grandfather! Poor father’s in prison!”

“I did not put him there,” observed Mr. Jervis, coldly — “you must go to Mr. Barnard on that affair.”

“Mother did go to him this morning,” replied Susan, “and he told her that she must apply to you —”

“Well!” exclaimed the grandfather, impatiently.

“But she said she dared not, angry as you were with her — more especially as it is through uncle Walter’s misfortune that all this misery has happened. Mother dared not come to you.”

“She was right enough there,” returned Mr. Jervis. “So she sent you?”

“No, indeed; she knows nothing of my coming. She sent me to carry home a cap to Mrs. Taylor, who lives in the next street, and as I was passing the door it came into my head to knock — and then Mrs. Norris brought me here — Oh, grandfather! I hope I have not done wrong! I hope you are not angry! — But if you were to see how sad and pale poor father looks in that dismal prison — and poor mother, how sick and ill she is, how her hand trembles when she tries to work — Oh, grandfather! if you could but see them, you would not wonder at my boldness.”

“All this comes of trusting to a speculating knave like

* *Dashed* — frightened. I believe this expression, though frequently used there, is not confined to Berkshire. It is one of the pretty provincial phrases by which Richardson has contrived to give a charming rustic grace to the early letters of Pamela.

Walter Price!" observed Mr. Jervis, rather as a soliloquy than to the child, who, however, heard and replied to the remark.

"He was very kind to me, was uncle Walter! He put me to school, to learn reading and writing, and cyphering, and all sorts of needle-work—not a charity-school, because he wished me to be amongst decent children, and not to learn bad ways. And he has written to offer to come to prison himself, if father wishes it—only—I don't understand about business—but even Mr. Barnard says that the best chance of recovering the money is his remaining at liberty; and indeed, indeed, grandfather, my uncle Walter is not so wicked as you think for—indeed he is not."

"This child is grateful!" was the thought that passed through her grandfather's mind; but he did not give it utterance. He, however, drew her closer to him, and seated her in the summer-house at his side. "So you can read and write, and keep accounts, and do all sorts of needle-work, can you, my little maid? And you can run of errands, doubtless, and are handy about a house? Should you like to live with me and Norris, and make my shirts, and read the newspaper to me of an evening, and learn to make puddings and pies, and be my own little Susan? Eh?—Should you like this?"

"Oh, grandfather!" exclaimed Susan, enchanted.

"And water the flowers," pursued Mr. Jervis, "and root out the weeds, and gather the beau-pots? Is not this a nice garden, Susy?"

"Oh, beautiful! dear grandfather, beautiful!"

"And you would like to live with me in this pretty house and this beautiful garden—should you, Susy?"

"Oh, yes, dear grandfather!"

"And never wish to leave me?"

"Oh, never! never!"

"Nor to see the dismal gaol again—the dismal, dreary gaol?"

"Never!—but father is to live here too?" inquired Susan, interrupting herself—"father and mother?"

"No!" replied her grandfather—"neither of them. It was you whom I asked to live here with me. I have nothing to do with them, and you must choose between us."

"They not live here! I to leave my father and my mother — my own dear mother, and she so sick! my own dear father, and he in a gaol! Oh, grandfather! you cannot mean it — you cannot be so cruel!"

"There is no cruelty in the matter, Susan. I give you the offer of leaving your parents, and living with me; but I do not compel you to accept it. You are an intelligent little girl, and perfectly capable of choosing for yourself. But I beg you to take notice that, by remaining with them, you will not only share, but increase their poverty; whereas, with me, you will not only enjoy every comfort yourself, but relieve them from the burden of your support."

"It is not a burden," replied Susan, firmly; — "I know that, young and weak, and ignorant as I am now, I am yet of some use to my dear mother — and of some comfort to my dear father; and every day I shall grow older and stronger, and more able to be a help to them both. And to leave them! to live here in plenty, whilst they were starving! to be gathering posies, whilst they were in prison! Oh, grandfather, I should die of the very thought. Thank you for your offer," continued she, rising, and dropping her little curtsy — "but my choice is made. Good evening, grandfather!"

"Don't be in such a hurry, Susy," rejoined her grandfather, shaking the ashes from his pipe, taking the last sip of his gin and water, and then proceeding to adjust his hat and wig — "Don't be in such a hurry: you and I shan't part so easily. You're a dear little girl, and since you won't stay with me, I must e'en go with you. The father and mother who brought up such a child must be worth bringing home. So, with your good leave, Miss Susan, we'll go and fetch them."

And, in the midst of Susy's rapturous thanks, her kisses and her tears, out they sallied; and the money was paid, and the debtor released, and established with his overjoyed wife in the best room of Mr. Jervis's pretty habitation, to the unspeakable gratitude of the whole party, and the ecstatic delight of the CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER.

SUPPERS AND BALLS;

OR, TOWN VERSUS COUNTRY.

THIRTY years ago Belford was a remarkably sociable place, just of the right size for pleasant visiting. In very small towns people see each other too closely, and fall almost unconsciously into the habit of prying and peeping into their neighbours' concerns, and gossiping and tittle-tattling, and squabbling, and jostling, as if the world were not wide enough for them; and such is the fact—their world is too narrow. In very great towns, on the other hand, folks see too little of one another, and do not care a straw for their near dwellers. Large provincial towns, the overgrown capitals of overgrown counties, are almost as bad in that respect as London, where next-door neighbours may come into the world, or go out of it—be born, or married, or buried, without one's hearing a word of the birth, or the wedding, or the funeral, until one reads the intelligence, two or three days afterwards, in the newspapers.

Now in Belford, thirty years ago, whilst you were perfectly secure from any such cold and chilling indifference to your well or ill being, so you might reckon on being tolerably free from the more annoying impertinence of a minute and scrutinising curiosity. The place was too large for the one evil, and too small for the other: almost every family of the class commonly called genteel, visited and was visited by the rest of their order; and not being a manufacturing town, and the trade, although flourishing, being limited to the supply of the inhabitants, and of the wealthy and populous neighbourhood, the distinction was more easily drawn than is usual in this commercial country; and the gentry of Belford might be comprised in the members of the three learned professions, the principal partners in the banks, one or two of the most thriving brewers, and that numerous body of idle persons who live upon their means, and whom the political economists are pleased, somewhat uncivilly, to denominate “the unproductive classes.”

Another favourable circumstance in the then state of the Belford society, was the circumstance of nobody's being over rich. Some had, to be sure, larger incomes than others; but there was no great monied man, no borough Cræsus, to look down upon his poorer neighbours, and insult them by upstart pride, or pompous condescension. All met upon the table-land of gentility, and the few who were more affluent contrived, almost without exception, to disarm envy by using their greater power for the gracious purpose of diffusing pleasure and promoting sociability. And certainly a more sociable set of people could not easily have been found.

To say nothing at present of the professional gentlemen, or that exceedingly preponderating part of the female "interest" (to borrow another cant phrase of the day), the widows and single ladies, the genteel inhabitants of Belford were as diversified as heart could desire. We had two naval captains; the one, a bold, dashing open-hearted tar, who, after remaining two or three years unemployed, fuming, and chafing, and grumbling over his want of interest, got a ship, and died, after a brilliant career, at the summit of fame and fortune; the other, a steady, business-like person, who did his duty as an English sailor always does, but who, wanting the art of making opportunities, the uncalculating bravery, the happy rashness, which seems essential to that branch of the service, lived obscurely, and died neglected. His wife had in her temperament the fire that her husband wanted. She was a virago, and would, beyond all doubt, have thought nothing of encountering a whole fleet, whether friends or foes; whilst Sir Charles's lady (for our more fortunate officer had already won that distinction) was a poor, shrinking, delicate, weak-spirited little woman, who would have fainted at the sound of a signal-gun, and have died of a royal salute. Both captains were great acquisitions to the society, especially Sir Charles, who, though he would have preferred a battle every day, had no objection, in default of that diversion, to a party of any sort, — dance, supper, dinner, rout, nothing came amiss to him, although it must be confessed that he liked the noisiest best.

Then arrived a young Irish gentleman, who, having run away with an heiress and spent as much of her fortune as the Court of Chancery would permit, came to Belford to retrench, and to wait for a place, which, through some exceedingly in-

direct and remote channel of interest, he expected to procure, and for which he pretended to prepare, and doubtless thought that he was preparing himself, by the study of Cocker's Arithmetic. *He study Cocker!* Oh, dear me! all that he was ever likely to know of pounds, shillings and pence, was the art of spending them, in which he was a proficient. A gay, agreeable, careless creature he was; and so was his pretty wife. They had married so young, that whilst still looking like boy and girl, a tribe of boys and girls were rising round them, all alike gay and kind, and merry and thoughtless. They were the very persons to promote parties, since without them they could not live.

Then came a Scotch colonel in the Company's service, with an elegant wife and a pretty daughter. A mighty man for dinnering and suppering was he! I question if Ude be a better cook. I am quite sure that he does not think so much of his own talents in that way as our colonel did. He never heard of a turtle within twenty miles but he offered to dress it, and once nearly broke his neck in descending into a subterranean kitchen to superintend the haunches at a mayor's feast. An excellent person was he, and a jovial, and a perfect gentleman even in his white apron.

Then came two graver pairs: a young clergyman, who had married a rich and very charming widow, and seemed to think it right to appear staid and demure, to conceal the half-a-dozen years by which she had the disadvantage of him; and a widow and her son, a young man just from college, and intended for the diplomatic line, for which, if to be silent, solemn, safe and dull, be a recommendation, he was very eminently gifted.

Then we had my friend the talking gentleman and his pretty wife; then a half-pay major, very prosy; then a retired commissary, very dozy; then a papa with three daughters; then a mamma with two sons; then a family too large to count; and then some score of respectable and agreeable ladies and gentlemen, the chorus of the opera, the figurantes of the ballet, who may fairly be summed up in one general eulogy as very good sort of people in their way.

This *catalogue raisonné* of the Belford gentlefolks does not sound very grand or very intellectual, or very much to boast about; but yet the component parts, the elements of society, mingled well together, and the result was almost as pleasant

as the colonel's inimitable punch — sweet and spirited, with a little acid, and not too much water — or as Sir Charles's champagne, sparkling and effervescent, and completely *up* as his own brilliant spirits and animated character. I was a girl at the time — a very young girl, and, what is more to the purpose, a very shy one, so that I mixed in none of the gaieties ; but, speaking from observation and recollection, I can fairly say that I never saw any society more innocently cheerful, or more completely free from any other restraints than those of good breeding and propriety. The gentlemen had frequent dinner-parties, and the young people occasional dances at such houses where the rooms were large enough ; but the pleasantest meetings were social suppers, preceded by a quiet rubber and a noisy round game, succeeded by one or two national airs, very sweetly sung by the Irishman's wife and the colonel's daughter, enlivened by comic songs by the talking gentleman — a genius in that line, and interspersed with more of fun and jest, and jollity, of jokes that nobody could explain, and of laughter no one knew why, than I ever have happened to witness amongst any assemblage of well-behaved and well-educated people. One does sometimes meet with enjoyment amongst a set of country lads and lasses ; but to see ladies and gentlemen merry as well as wise, is, in these utilitarian days, somewhat uncommon.

N.B. If I were asked whether this happy state of things still continues, I should find the question difficult to answer. Belford is thirty years older since the joyous Christmas holidays which have left so pleasant an impression on my memory, and more than thirty years larger, since it has increased and multiplied, not after the staid and sober fashion of an English country town, but in the ratio of an American city — Cincinnati for instance, or any other settlement of the West, which was the wilderness yesterday, and starts into a metropolis to-morrow. Moreover, I doubt if the habits of the middle ranks in England be as sociable now as they were then. The manners immortalised by Miss Austen are rapidly passing away. There is more of finery, more of literature, more of accomplishment, and, above all, more of pretension, than there used to be. Scandal vanished with the tea-table ; gossiping is out of fashion ; jokes are gone by ; conversation is critical, analytical, political — anything but personal. The

world is a wise world, and a learned world, and a scientific world ; but not half so merry a world as it was thirty years ago. And then, courteous reader, I too am thirty years older, which must be taken into the account ; for if those very supper-parties, those identical Christmas holidays, which I enjoyed so much at fourteen, were to return again bodily, with all their “quips and cranks, and jollity,” it is just a thousand to one but they found the woman of forty-four too grave for them, and longing for the quiet and decorum of the elegant *conversazione* and select dinners of 1834 : of such contradictions is this human nature of ours mingled and composed !

To return once more to Belford, as I remember it at bonny fifteen.

The public amusements of the town were sober enough. Ten years before, clubs had flourished ; and the heads of houses had met once a week at the King's Arms for the purpose of whist-playing ; whilst the ladies, thus deserted by their liege lords, had established a meeting at each other's mansions on club-nights, from which, by way of retaliation, the whole male sex was banished except Mr. Singleton. At the time, however, of which I speak, these clubs had passed away ; and the public diversions were limited to an annual visit from a respectable company of actors, the theatre being, as is usual in country places, very well conducted and exceedingly ill attended ; to biennial concerts, equally good in their kind, and rather better patronised ; and to almost weekly incursions from itinerant lecturers on all the arts and sciences, and from prodigies of every kind, whether three-year-old fiddlers or learned dogs.

There were also balls in their spacious and commodious town-hall, which seemed as much built for the purposes of dancing as for that of trying criminals. Public balls there were in abundance ; but at the time of which I speak they were of less advantage to the good town of Belford than any one, looking at the number of good houses and of pretty young women, could well have thought possible. Never was a place in which the strange prejudice, the invisible but strongly felt line of demarcation, which all through England divides the county families from the townspeople, was more rigidly sustained. To live in that respectable borough was in general a recognised exclusion from the society of the neighbourhood ;

and if by chance any one so high in wealth, or station, or talent, or connection, as to set the proscription at defiance, happened to settle within the obnoxious walls, why then the country circle took possession of the new-comer, and he was, although living in the very heart of the borough, claimed and considered as a country family, and seized by the county and relinquished by the town accordingly. The thing is too absurd to reason upon ; but so it was, and so to a great degree it still continues all over England.

A public ball-room is, perhaps, of all others the scene where this feeling is most certain to display itself ; and the Belford balls had, from time immemorial, been an arena where the conflicting vanities of the town and county belles had come into collision. A circumstance that had happened some twenty years before the time of which I write (that is to say, nearly fifty years ago) had, however, ended in the total banishment of the Belford beauties from the field of battle.

Everybody remembers the attack made upon George III. by an unfortunate mad woman of the name of Margaret Nicholson ; the quantity of addresses sent up in consequence from all parts of the kingdom ; and the number of foolish persons who accompanied the deputations and accepted the honour of knighthood on the occasion. Amongst these simple personages were two aldermen of Belford, a brewer, and a banker, whose daughters, emulous of their fathers' wisdom, were rash enough at the next monthly assembly to take place above the daughters of the high sheriff, and the county members, and half the landed gentry of the neighbourhood. The young country ladies behaved with great discretion ; they put a stop to the remonstrances of their partners, walked in a mass to the other end of the room, formed their own set there, and left the daughters of the new-made knights to go down the dance by themselves. But the result was the establishment of subscription balls, under the direction of a county committee, and a complete exclusion, for the time at least, of the female inhabitants of Belford.

By some means or other the gentlemen contrived to creep in as partners, though not much to their own comfort or advantage. The county balls at Belford were amongst the scenes of King Harwood's most notable disappointments ; and a story was in circulation (for the truth of which, however, I will not

venture to vouch) that our young diplomatist, who, from the day he first entered Oxford to that in which he left it, had been a tuft-hunter by profession, was actually so deceived, by her being on a visit to a noble family in the neighbourhood, as to request the hand of a young lady for the two first dances, who turned out to be nothing better than the sister of the curate of his own parish, who came the very next week to keep her brother's house, a house of six rooms little better than closets, in Belford, who had not the apology of beauty, and whose surname was Brown!

It follows from this state of things, that in tracing the annals of beauty in the Belford ball-room, in our subsequent pages, our portraits must be chiefly drawn from the young ladies of the neighbourhood, the fair damsels of the town (for of many a fair damsel the good town could boast) having been driven to other scenes for the display of their attractions. I am not sure that they lost many admirers by the exclusion; for a pretty girl is a pretty girl, even if she chance to live amongst houses and brick-walls, instead of trees and green fields,—and somehow or other, young men will make the discovery. And a pair of bright eyes may do as much execution at a concert, or a lecture, or a horticultural show, or even — with all reverence be it spoken — at a missionary meeting, as if threading the mazes of the old-fashioned country-dance, or *dos-à-dos-ing* in the more fashionable quadrille. Nothing breaks down artificial distinctions so certainly as beauty; and so, or I mistake, our Belford lasses have found.

THE OLD ÉMIGRÉ.

THE town of Belford is, like many of our ancient English boroughs, full of monastic remains, which give an air at once venerable and picturesque to the old irregular streets and suburban gardens of the place. Besides the great ruins of the abbey extending over many acres, and the deep and beautiful arched gateway forming part of an old romantic house which, although erected many centuries later, is now falling to decay, whilst the massive structure of the arch remains firm and

vigorous as a rock*, — besides that graceful and shadowy gateway which, with the majestic elms that front it, has formed the subject of almost as many paintings and drawings as Durham Cathedral — besides these venerable remains every corner of the town presents some relic of “hoar antiquity” to the eye of the curious traveller. Here, a stack of chimneys, — there, a bit of garden wall, — in this place, a stone porch with the date 1472, — in that, an oaken-raftered granary of still earlier erection — all give token of the solid architecture of the days when the mitred abbots of the great monastery of Belford, where princes have lodged and kings been buried (as witness the stone coffins not long since disinterred in the ruined church of the Abbey), were the munificent patrons and absolute suzerains of the good burghers and their borough town. Even where no such traces exist, the very names of the different localities indicate their connection with these powerful Benedictines. Friar Street, Minster Street, the Oriel, the Holy Brook, the Abbey Mills, — names which have long outlived, not only the individual monks, but even the proud foundation by which they were bestowed — still attest the extensive influence of the lord abbot. If it be true, according to Lord Byron, that “words are things,” still more truly may we say that names are histories.

Nor were these remains confined to the town. The granges and parks belonging to the wide-spreading abbey lands, their manors, and fisheries, extended for many miles around; and more than one yeoman, in the remoter villages, claims to be descended of the tenants who held farms under the church; whilst many a mouldering parchment indicates the assumption of the abbey property by the crown, or its bestowal on some favoured noble of the court. And amidst these relics of ecclesiastical pomp and wealth, be it not forgotten that better things were mingled, — almshouses for the old, hospitals for the sick, and crosses and chapels at which the pilgrim or the wayfarer might offer up his prayers. One of the latter, dedicated to “Our Ladye,” was singularly situated on the centre pier of the old bridge at Upton, where, indeed, the original basement, surmounted by a more modern dwelling-house, still continues.

* It was not, I believe, at this gateway, but at one the very remains of which are now swept away, that the abbot and two of his monks were hanged at the time of the Reformation: a most causeless piece of cruelty, since no resistance was offered by the helpless Benedictines.

By far the most beautiful ruin in Belford is, however, the east end of an old Friary, situate at the entrance of the town from the pleasant village of Upton above mentioned, from which it is divided by about half a mile of green meadows sloping down to the great river, with its long straggling bridge, sliding, as it were, into an irregular street of cottages, trees, and gardens, terminated by the old church, embosomed in wood, and crowned by the great chalk-pit and the high range of Oxforshire hills.

The end of the old Friary forming the angle between two of the streets of Belford, and being itself the last building of the town, commands this pretty pastoral prospect. It is placed in about half an acre of ground, partly cultivated as a garden, partly planted with old orchard trees, standing back both from the street on the one side, and the road on the other, apart and divided from every meaner building, except a small white cottage, which is erected against the lower part, and which it surmounts in all the pride of its venerable beauty, retaining almost exactly that form of a pointed arch, to which the groined roof was fitted ; almost, but not quite, since on one side part of the stones are crumbling away into a picturesque irregularity, whilst the other is overgrown by large masses of ivy, and the snapdragon and the wallflower have contributed to break the outline. The east window, however, is perfect — as perfect as if finished yesterday. And the delicate tracery of that window, the rich fretwork of its Gothic carving, clear as point-lace, regular as the quaint cutting of an Indian fan, have to me — especially when the summer sky is seen through those fantastic mouldings, and the ash and elder saplings, which have sprung from the fallen masses below, mingle their fresh and vivid tints with the hoary apple-trees of the orchard, and the fine mellow hue of the weather-stained gray stone — a truer combination of that which the mind seeks in ruins, the union of the beautiful and the sad, than any similar scene with which I am acquainted, however aided by silence and solitude, by majestic woods and mighty waters.

Perhaps the very absence of these romantic adjuncts, the passing at once from the busy hum of men to this memorial of past generations, may aid the impression ; or perhaps the associations connected with the small cottage that leans against it, and harmonises so well in form, and colour, and feeling

with the general picture, may have more influence than can belong merely to form and colour in producing the half-unconscious melancholy that steals over the thoughts.

Nothing could be less melancholy than my first recollections of that dwelling, when, a happy school-girl at home for the holidays, I used to open the small wicket, and run up the garden path, and enter the ever-open door to purchase Mrs. Duval's famous brioches and marangles.

Mrs. Duval had not always lived in the cottage by the Friary. Fifteen years before, she had been a trim, black-eyed maiden, the only daughter and heiress of old Anthony Richards, an eminent confectioner in Queen Street. There she had presided over turtle soup and tartlets, ices and jellies; in short, over the whole business of the counter, with much discretion, her mother being dead, and Anthony keeping close to his territory — the oven. With admirable discretion had Miss Fanny Richards conducted the business of the shop — smiling, civil, and attentive to every body, and yet contriving, — in spite of her gay and pleasant manner, the evident light-heartedness which danced in her sparkling eyes, and her airy steps, and her arch yet innocent speech, a light-heartedness which charmed even the gravest — to avoid any the slightest approach to allurements or coquetry. The most practised recruiting officer that ever lounged in a country town could not strike up a flirtation with Fanny Richards; nor could the more genuine admiration of the raw boy just come from Eton, and not yet gone to Oxford, extort the slenderest encouragement from the prudent and right-minded maiden. She returned their presents and laughed at their poetry, and had raised for herself such a reputation for civility and propriety, that when the French man-cook of a neighbouring nobleman, an *artiste* of the first water, made his proposals, and her good father, after a little John Bullish demur on the score of language and country, was won, imitating the example related of some of the old painters to bestow on him his daughter's hand, in reward of the consummate skill of his productions (a magnificent *Pâté de Périgord* is said to have been the *chef-d'œuvre* which gained the fair prize), not a family in the town or neighbourhood but wished well to the young nymph of the counter, and resolved to do everything that their protection and patronage could compass for her advantage and comfort.

The excellent character and excellent confectionary of the adroit and agreeable Frenchman completely justified Fanny's choice ; and her fond father, from the hour that he chuckingly iced her wedding-cake, and changed his old, homely, black and white inscription of "Anthony Richards, pastry-cook," which had whilom modestly surmounted the shop-window, into a very grand and very illegible scroll, gold on a blue ground, in the old English character (*Arabesque* the bridegroom called it ; indeed, if it had been Arabic, it could hardly have been more unintelligible), of "Anthony Richards and Louis Duval, man-cooks and restorers," which required the contents of the aforesaid window to explain its meaning to English eyes, — from that triumphant hour to the time of his death, some three years afterwards, never once saw cause to repent that he had entrusted his daughter's fortune and happiness to a foreigner. So completely was his prejudice surmounted, that when a boy was born, and it was proposed to give him the name of his grandfather, the old man positively refused. "Let him be such another Louis Duval as you have been," said he, "and I shall be satisfied."

All prospered in Queen-street, and all deserved to prosper. From the noblemen and gentlemen at whose houses on days of high festival Louis Duval officiated as *chef de cuisine*, down to the urchins of the street, halfpenny customers whose object it was to get most sweets for their money, all agreed that the cookery and the cakery, the soufflés and the buns, were inimitable. Perhaps the ready and smiling civility, the free and genuine kindness, which looked out and weighed a pennyworth of sugar-plums with an attention as real and as good-natured as that with which an order was taken for a winter dessert, had something to do with this universal popularity. Be that as it may, all prospered, and all deserved to prosper, in Queen-street ; and, until the old man died, it would have been difficult, in the town or the country, to fix on a more united or a happier family. That event, by bringing an accession of property and power to Louis Duval, introduced into his mind a spirit of speculation, an ambition (if one may apply so grand a word to the projects of a confectioner), which became as fatal to his fortunes as it has often proved to those of greater men. He became weary of his paltry profits and his provincial success — weary even of the want of competition

— for poor old Mrs. Thomas, the pastry-cook in the market-place, an inert and lumpish personage of astounding dimensions, whose fame, such as it was, rested on huge plum-cakes almost as big round as herself, and little better than bread with a few currants interspersed, wherewith, under the plea of wholesomeness, poor children were crammed at school and at home, — poor old Mrs. Thomas could never be regarded as his rival ; — these motives, together with the wish to try a wider field, and an unlucky suggestion from his old master the earl, that he and his wife would be the very persons for a London hotel, induced him to call in his debts, dispose of his house and business in Queen-street, embark in a large concern in the West-end, and leave Belford altogether.

The result of this measure may be easily anticipated. Wholly unaccustomed to London, and to that very nice and difficult undertaking, a great hotel, — and with a capital which, though considerable in itself, was yet inadequate to a speculation of such magnitude, — poor Monsieur and Madame Duval (for they had assumed all the Frenchifications possible on setting up in the great city) were tricked, and cheated, and laughed at by her countrymen and by his, and in the course of four years were completely ruined ; whilst he, who might always have procured a decent livelihood by going about to different houses as a professor of the culinary art (for though Louis had lost every thing else, he had not, as he used to observe, and it was a comfort to him, poor fellow ! lost his professional reputation), caught cold by overheating himself in cooking a great dinner, fell into a consumption, and died ; leaving his young wife and her little boy friendless and penniless in the wide world.

Under these miserable circumstances, poor Fanny naturally returned to her native town, with some expectation, perhaps, that the patrons and acquaintances of her father and her husband might re-establish her in her old business, for which, having been brought up in the trade, and having retained all the receipts which had made their shop so celebrated, she was peculiarly qualified. But, although surrounded by well-wishers and persons ready to assist her to a certain small extent, Mrs. Duval soon found how difficult it is for any one, especially a woman, to obtain money without security, and without any certainty of repayment. That she had failed

once was reason enough to render people fearful that she might fail again. Besides, her old rival, Mrs. Thomas, was also dead, and had been succeeded by a Quaker couple, so alert, so intelligent, so accurately and delicately clean in all their looks, and ways, and wares, that the very sight of their bright counter, and its simple but tempting cates, gave their customers an appetite. They were the fashion, too, unluckily. Nothing could go down for luncheon in any family of gentility but Mrs. Purdy's biscuits, and poor Mrs. Duval found her more various and richer confectionary comparatively disregarded. The most that her friends could do for her was to place her in the Friary Cottage, where, besides carrying on a small trade with the few old customers who still adhered to herself and her tartlets, she could have the advantage of letting a small bedchamber and a pleasant little parlour to any lodger desirous of uniting good air, and a close vicinity to a large town, with a situation peculiarly secluded and romantic.

The first occupant of Mrs. Duval's pleasant apartments was a Catholic priest, an *émigré*, to whom they had a double recommendation, in his hostess's knowledge of the French language, of French habits, and French cookery (she being, as he used to affirm, the only Englishwoman that ever made drinkable coffee), and in the old associations of the precincts ("piece of a cloister") around which the venerable memorials of the ancient faith still lingered even in decay. He might have said, with Antonio, in one of the finest scenes ever conceived by a poet's imagination, that in which the Echo answers from the murdered woman's grave,—

"I do love these ancient ruins;
We never tread upon them but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history;
And, questionless, here in this open court
(Which now lies open to the injuries
Of stormy weather) some do lie interr'd,
Loved the church so well, and gave so largely to't,
They thought it should have canopied their bones
Till doomsday: but all things have their end:
Churches and cities (which have diseases like to men)
Must have like death that we have."

WEBSTER — *Duchess of Malfy*.

If such were the inducements that first attracted M. l'Abbé Villaret, he soon found others in the pleasing manners and amiable temper of Mrs. Duval, whose cheerfulness and kindness of heart had not abandoned her in her change of fortune;

and in the attaching character of her charming little boy, who — singularly tall of his age, and framed with the mixture of strength and delicacy, of pliancy and uprightness, which characterises the ideal forms of the Greek marbles, and the reality of the human figure amongst the aborigines of North America*, with a countenance dark, sallow, and colourless, but sparkling with expression as that of the natives of the South of Europe, the eyes all laughter, the smile all intelligence, — was as unlike in mind as in person to the chubby, ruddy, noisy urchins by whom he was surrounded. Quick, gentle, docile, and graceful to a point of elegance rarely seen even amongst the most carefully-educated children, he might have been placed at court as the page of a fair young queen, and have been the plaything and pet of the maids of honour. The pet of M. l'Abbé he became almost as soon as he saw him; and to that pleasant distinction was speedily added the invaluable advantage of being his pupil.

L'Abbé Villaret had been a cadet of one of the oldest families in France, destined to the church as the birthright of a younger son, but attached to his profession with a seriousness and earnestness not common amongst the gay noblesse of the *ancien régime*, who too often assumed the *petit collet* as the badge of one sort of frivolity, just as their elder brothers wielded the sword, and served a campaign or two, by way of excuse for an idleness and dissipation of a different kind. This devotion had of course been greatly increased by the persecution of the church which distinguished the commencement of the revolution. The good Abbé had been marked as one of the earliest victims, and had escaped, through the gratitude of an old servant, from the fate which swept off sisters, and brothers, and almost every individual, except himself, of a large and flourishing family. Penniless and solitary, he made his way to England, and found an asylum in the town of Belford, at first assisted by the pittance allowed by our government to those unfortunate foreigners, and subsequently supported by his own exertions as assistant to the priest of the Catholic chapel in Belford, and as a teacher of the French language in the town and neighbourhood; and so complete had been the ravages of the revolution in his own

* My readers will remember West's exclamation on the first sight of the Apollo, — "A young Mohawk Indian, by Heaven!"

family, and so entirely had he established himself in the esteem of his English friends, that when the short peace of Amiens restored so many of his brother *émigrés* to their native land, he refused to quit the country of his adoption, and remained the contented inhabitant of the Friary Cottage.

The contented and most beloved inhabitant, not only of that small cottage, but of the town to which it belonged, was the good Abbé. Everybody loved the kind and placid old man, whose resignation was so real and so cheerful, who had such a talent for making the best of things, whose moral alchymy could extract some good out of every evil, and who seemed only the more indulgent to the faults and follies of others because he had so little cause to require indulgence for his own. One prejudice he had—a lurking predilection in favour of good blood and long descent; the Duke de St. Simon himself would hardly have felt a stronger partiality for the Montmorencies or the Montemars; and yet so well was this prejudice governed, so closely veiled from all offensive display, that not only *la belle et bonne bourgeoise* Madame Lane, as he used to call the excellent wife of that great radical leader, but even *le gros bourgeois son époux*, desperate whig as he was, were amongst the best friends and sincerest well-wishers of our courteous old Frenchman. He was their customer for the little meat that his economy and his appetite required; and they were his, for as many French lessons as their rosy, laughing daughters could be coaxed into taking during the very short interval that elapsed between their respectively leaving school and getting married. How the Miss Lanes came to learn French at all, a piece of finery rather inconsistent with the substantial plainness of their general education, I could not comprehend, until I found that the daughters of Mrs. Green, the grocer, their opposite neighbour, between whom and dear Mrs. Lane there existed a little friendly rivalry (for, good woman as she was, even Margaret Lane had something of the ordinary frailties of human nature), were studying French, music, dancing, drawing, and Italian; and, although she quite disapproved of this hash of accomplishments, yet no woman in Christendom could bear to be so entirely outdone by her next neighbour: besides, she doubtless calculated that the little they were likely to know of the language would be too soon forgotten to do them any harm;

that they would settle into sober tradesmen's wives, content "to scold their maidens in their mother tongue;" and that the only permanent consequence would be, the giving her the power to be of some slight service to the good *émigré*. So the Miss Lanes learned French; and Mrs. Lane, who was one of poor Mrs. Duval's best friends and most constant customers, borrowed all her choicest receipts to compound for the Abbé his favourite dishes, and contrived to fix the lessons at such an hour as should authorise her offering the refreshment which she had so carefully prepared. Bijou, too, the Abbé's pet dog, a beautiful little curly yellow and white spaniel of great sagacity and fidelity, always found a dinner ready for him at Mrs. Lane's; and Louis Duval, his master's other pet, was at least equally welcome; so that the whole trio were soon at home in the Butts. And although Stephen held in abomination all foreigners, and thought it eminently patriotic and national to hate the French and their ways, never had tasted coffee or taken a pinch of snuff in his days; and although the Abbé, on his part, abhorred smoking, and beer, and punch, and loud talking, and all the John Bullisms whereof Stephen was compounded; although Mr. Lane would have held himself guilty of a sin had he known the French for "how d'ye do?" and the Abbé, teacher of languages though he were, had marvellously contrived to learn no more English than just served him to make out his pupil's translations (perhaps the constant reading of those incomparable compositions might be the reason why the real spoken idiomatic tongue was still unintelligible to him); yet they did contrive, in spite of their mutual prejudices and their deficient means of communication, to be on as friendly and as cordial terms as any two men in Belford; and, considering that the Frenchman was a decided aristocrat and the Englishman a violent democrat, and that each knew the other's politics, that is saying much.

But from the castle to the cottage, from the nobleman whose children he taught down to the farmer's wife who furnished him with eggs and butter, the venerable Abbé was a universal favourite. There was something in his very appearance — his small neat person, a little bent, more by sorrow than age — his thin white hair — his mild intelligent countenance, with a sweet placid smile, that spoke more of

courtesy than of gaiety — his quiet manner, his gentle voice, and even the broken English, which reminded one that he was a sojourner in a strange land, that awakened a mingled emotion of respect and of pity. His dress, too, always neat, yet never seeming new, contributed to the air of decayed gentility that hung about him; and the beautiful little dog who was his constant attendant, and the graceful boy who so frequently accompanied him, formed an interesting group on the high roads which he frequented; for the good Abbé was so much in request as a teacher, and the amount of his earnings was so considerable, that he might have passed for well-to-do in the world, had not his charity to his poorer countrymen, and his liberality to Louis and to Mrs. Duval, been such as to keep him constantly poor.

Amongst his pupils, and the friends of his pupils, his urbanity and kindness could not fail to make him popular; whilst his gentleness and patience with the stupid, and his fine taste and power of inspiring emulation amongst the cleverer children, rendered him a very valuable master. Besides his large connection in Belford, he attended, as we have intimated, several families in the neighbourhood, and one or two schools in the smaller towns, at eight or ten miles' distance; and the light and active old man was accustomed to walk to these lessons, with little Bijou for his companion, even in the depth of winter; depending, it may be, on an occasional cast for himself and his dog in the gig of some good-natured traveller, or the cart of some small farmer or his sturdy dame returning from the market-town (for it is a characteristic of our county that we abound in female drivers — almost all our country wives are capital whips), who thought themselves well repaid for their civility by a pinch of rappee in the one case, or a “Tank you, madame!” “Moche obligé, sar!” on the other.

Nobody minded a winter's walk less than M. l'Abbé; and as for Bijou, he delighted in it, and would dance and whisk about, jump round his master's feet, and bark for very joy, whenever he saw the hat brushing, and the great-coat putting on, and the gloves taken out of their drawer, in preparation for a sortie, especially in snowy weather — for Bijou loved a frisk in the snow, and Louis liked it no less. But there was no person who never liked these cold and distant rambles,

and that person was Mrs. Duval ; and on one dreary morning in January, especially, she opposed them by main and by might. She had had bad dreams, too ; and Mrs. Duval was the least in the world superstitious ; and “ she was sure that no good could come of taking such a walk as that to Chardley, full a dozen miles, on such a day — nobody could be so unreasonable as to expect M. l’Abbé in such weather ; and as for Miss Smith’s school, Miss Smith’s school might wait ! ”

M. l’Abbé reasoned with her in vain. “ Your dreams — bah ! — I must go, my dear little woman. All Miss Smith’s pupils are come back from the holidays, and they want their lessons, and they have brought the money to pay me, and I want the money to pay you, and I will bring you a pink ribbon as bright as your cheeks, and Louis — ”

“ Oh, pray let me go with you, M. l’Abbé ! ” interrupted Louis.

“ And Louis shall stay with you, ” pursued M. l’Abbé. “ You must not go, my dear boy ; stay with your mother ; always be a good son to your good mother, and I will bring you a book. I will bring you a new Horace, since you get on so well with your Latin. God bless you, my dear boy ! Allons, Bijou ! ” And M. l’Abbé was setting off.

“ At least stay all night ! ” interposed Mrs. Duval ; “ don’t come home in the dark, pray ! ”

“ Bah ! ” replied the Abbé, laughing.

“ And with money, too ! and so many bad people about ! and such a dream as I have had ! ” again exclaimed Madame Duval. “ I thought that two wolves — ”

“ Your dream ! bah ! ” ejaculated the Abbé. “ I shall bring you a pink ribbon, and be home by ten. ” And with these words he and Bijou departed.

Ten o’clock came — a cold, frosty night, not moonlight, but starlight, and with so much snow upon the ground, that the beaten pathway on the high road to Chardley might be easily traced. Mrs. Duval, who had been fidgetty all through the day, became more so as the evening advanced, particularly as Louis importuned her vehemently to let him go and meet their dear lodger.

“ You go ! No, indeed ! ” replied Madame Duval — “ at this time of night, and after my dream ! It’s quite bad enough to have M. l’Abbé wandering about the high roads,

and money with him, and so many bad people stirring. I saw one great, tall, dangerous-looking fellow at the door this morning, who seemed as if he had been listening when he talked of bringing money home: I should not wonder if he broke into the house — and my dream, too! Stay where you are, Louis. I won't hear of your going."

And the poor boy, who had been taking down his furred cap to go, looked at his mother's anxious face, and stayed.

The hours wore away — eleven o'clock struck, and twelve — and still there were no tidings of the Abbé. Mrs. Duval began to comfort herself that he must have stayed to sleep at Chardley; that the Miss Smiths, whom she knew to be kind women, had insisted on his sleeping at their house; and she was preparing to go to bed in that persuasion, when a violent scratching and whining was heard at the door, and on Louis running to open it, little Bijou rushed in, covered with dirt, and without his master.

"Oh, my dream!" exclaimed Mrs. Duval. "Louis, I thought that two wolves ——"

"Mother," interrupted the boy, "see how Bijou is jumping upon me, and whining, and then running to the door, as if to entice me to follow him. I must go."

"Oh, Louis! remember!" — again screamed his mother — "Remember the great ill-looking fellow who was listening this morning!"

"You forget, dear mother, that we all spoke in French, and that he could not have understood a word," returned Louis.

"But my dream!" persisted Mrs. Duval. "My dreams always come true. Remember the pot I dreamt of your finding in the ruins, and which, upon digging for, you *did* find."

"Which you dreamt was a pot of gold, and which turned out to be a broken paint-pot," replied Louis, impatiently. "Mother," added he, "I am sorry to disobey you, but see how this poor dog is dragging me to the door; hark how he whines! And look! look! there is blood upon his coat! Perhaps his master has fallen and hurt himself, and even my slight help may be of use. I must go, and I will."

And following the word with the deed, Louis obeyed the almost speaking action of the little dog, and ran quickly out of the house, on the road to Chardley. His mother, after an instant of vague panic, recovered herself enough to alarm the

neighbours, and send more efficient help than a lad of eleven years old to assist in the search.

With a beating heart the brave and affectionate boy followed the dog, who led with a rapid pace and an occasional low moan along the high road to Chardley. The night had become milder, the clouds were driving along the sky, and a small, sleety rain fell by gusts; all, in short, bespoke an approaching thaw, although the ground continued covered with snow, which cast a cold, dreary light on every object. For nearly three miles Louis and Bijou pursued their way alone. At the end of that time, they were arrested by shouts and lanterns advancing rapidly from the town, and the poor lad recognised the men whom his mother had sent to his assistance.

“Any news of the poor French gentleman, master?” inquired John Gleve, the shoemaker, as he came up, almost breathless with haste. “It’s lucky that I and Martin had two pair of boots to finish, and had not left our work; for poor Mrs. Duval there is half crazy with her fears for him and her dread about you. How couldst thou think of running off alone? What good could a lad like thee do, frightening his poor mother? — And yet one likes un for’t,” added John, softening as he proceeded in his harangue; “one likes un for’t mainly. But look at the dog!” pursued he, interrupting himself; “look at the dog, how he’s snuffing and shuffling about in the snow! And hark how he wines and barks, questing like! And see what a trampling there’s been here, and how the snow on the side of the path is trodden about!”

“Hold down the lantern!” exclaimed Louis. “Give me the light, I beseech you. Look here! this is blood — *his* blood!” sobbed the affectionate boy; and, guided partly by that awful indication, partly by the disturbed snow, and partly by the dog, who, trembling in every limb, and keeping up a low moan, still pursued the track, they clambered over a gate into a field by the road-side; and in a ditch, at a little distance, found what all expected to find — the lifeless body of the Abbé.

He had been dead apparently for some hours; for the corpse was cold, and the blood had stiffened on two wounds in his body. His pockets had been rifled of his purse and his pocket-book, both of which were found, with what money might have been in them taken out, cast into the hedge at a small distance,

together with a sword with a broken hilt, with which the awful deed had probably been committed. Nothing else had been taken from the poor old man. His handkerchief and snuff-box were still in his pocket, together with three yards of rose-coloured ribbon, neatly wrapped in paper, and a small edition of Horace, with the leaves uncut. It may be imagined with what feelings Mrs. Duval and Louis looked at these tokens of recollection. Her grief found in tears the comfortable relief which Heaven has ordained for woman's sorrow; but Louis could not cry — the consolation was denied him. A fierce spirit of revenge had taken possession of the hitherto gentle and placid boy: to discover and bring to justice the murderer, and to fondle and cherish poor Bijou (who was with difficulty coaxed into taking food, and lay perpetually at the door of the room which contained his old master's body), seemed to be the only objects for which Louis lived.

The wish to discover the murderer was general throughout the neighbourhood where the good, the pious, the venerable old man—harmless and inoffensive in word and deed, just, and kind, and charitable—had been so truly beloved and respected. Large rewards were offered by the Catholic gentry*, and every exertion was made by the local police, and

* I cannot name the Catholic gentry without paying my humble but most sincere tribute of respect to the singularly high character of the old Catholic families in this county. It seems as if the oppression under which they so long laboured, had excited them to oppose to such injustice the passive but powerful resistance of high moral virtue, of spotless integrity, of chivalrous honour, and of a diffusive charity, which their oppressors would have done well to imitate. Amongst them are to be found the names of Throckmorton, the friend and patron of Cowper, and of Blount, so wound up with every recollection of Pope, and of Eyston, of East Hendrid, more ancient, perhaps, than any house in the county, whose curious old chapel, appended to his mansion, is mentioned in a deed bearing date the 19th of May, A.D. 1323, now in the possession of the family. Nothing can be more interesting than the account, in a MS. belonging to Mr. Eyston, of the re-opening of this chapel during the short period in which the Roman Catholic religion was tolerated under James the Second; and of the persecution which succeeded at the Revolution. These scenes are now matters of history, and of history only; since the growing wisdom and the humanising spirit of the legislature and the age forbid even the fear of their recurrence; but as curious historical documents, and as a standing lesson against bigotry and intolerance, however styled, a collection of such narratives (and many such, I believe, exist amongst the old Catholic families,) would be very valuable. One of the most remarkable MSS. that I have happened to meet with, is an account of the life and character of Sir Francis Englefeld, Knt. privy counsellor to Queen Mary, who retired into Spain to escape from the persecutions of Elizabeth, and died in an exile which he shared with many of his most eminent countrymen. He also belonged to our neighbourhood; the family of Englefield, now extinct, being the ancient possessors of Whiteknights. The Catholic gentleman, however, of our own day, whom Belford has the greatest cause to rank amongst its benefactors, is our neighbour—I will venture to say our friend—Mr. Wheble, a man eminently charitable, liberal, and enlightened, whose zeal for his own church, whilst it does not impede the exercise of the widest and the most genuine benevolence towards the professors of other forms of faith, has induced him to purchase all that could be purchased of the

the magistracy of the town and country, to accomplish this great object. John Gleve had accurately measured the shoe-marks to and from the ditch where the body was found ; but farther than the gate of the field they had not thought to trace the footsteps ; and a thaw having come on, all signs had disappeared before the morning. It had been ascertained that the Miss Smiths had paid him, besides some odd money, in two 10*l.* notes of the Chardley bank, the numbers of which were known ; but of them no tidings could be procured. He had left their house, on his return, about six o'clock in the evening, and had been seen to pass through a turnpike-gate, midway between the two towns, about eight, when, with his usual courtesy, he bade a cheerful good-night to the gate-keeper ; and this was the last that had been heard of him. No suspicious person had been observed in the neighbourhood ; the most sagacious and experienced officers were completely at fault ; and the coroner's inquest was obliged to bring in the vague and unsatisfactory verdict of " Found murdered, by some person or persons unknown."

Many loose people, such as beggars and vagrants, and wandering packmen, were, however, apprehended, and obliged to give an account of themselves ; and on one of these, a rag-man, called James Wilson, something like suspicion was at last fixed. The sword with which the murder was committed, an old regimental sword, with the mark and number of the regiment ground out, had, as I have said before, a broken hilt ; and round this hilt was wound a long strip of printed calico, of a very remarkable pattern, which a grocer's wife in Belford, attracted by the strange curiosity with which vulgar persons pursue such sights, to go and look at it as it lay exposed for recognition on a table in the Town Hall, remembered to have seen in the shape of a gown on the back of a girl who had lived with her a twelvemonth before ; and the

ruins of the great abbey, and to rescue the little that was still undesecrated by the prison, the school, and the wharf. Of these fine remains of the splendour and the piety of our ancestors, the beautiful arch and the sight of the abbey-church are fortunately amongst the portions thus preserved from baser uses. It is impossible not to sympathise strongly with the feeling which dictated this purchase, and equally impossible not to lament, if only as a matter of taste, that there was no such guardian hand fifty years ago, to prevent the erection of the county gaol, and the subsequent introduction of quays and national schools amongst some of the most extensive and finely-situated monastic ruins in England, now irreparably contaminated by objects the most unsightly, and associations the most painful and degrading.

girl, on being sought out in a neighbouring village, deposed readily to having sold the gown, several weeks back, to the rag-man in question. The measure of the shoes also fitted ; but they unluckily were of a most common shape and size. Wilson brought a man from the paper-mill to prove that the entire gown in question had been carried there by him, with other rags, about a month before ; and called various witnesses, who made out a complete alibi on the night in question ; so that the magistrates, although strongly prejudiced against him, from countenance and manner, — the down look and the daring audacity with which nature, or rather evil habit, often stamps the ruffian, — were, after several examinations, on the point of discharging him, when young Louis, who had attended the whole inquiry with an intelligence and an intensity of interest which, boy as he was, had won for him the privilege of being admitted even to the private examinations of the magistrates, and whose ill opinion of Wilson had increased every hour, he himself hardly knew why, suddenly exclaimed, “ Stop until I bring a witness ! ” and darted out of the room.

During the interval of his absence, — for such was the power of the boy’s intense feeling and evident intelligence, that the magistrates *did* stop for him, — one of the police-officers happened to observe how tightly the prisoner grasped his hat. “ Is it mere anger ? ” thought he within himself ; “ or is it agitation ? or can they have been such fools as not to search the lining ? ” — “ Let me look at that hat of yours, Wilson,” said he aloud.

“ It has been searched,” replied Wilson, still holding it. “ What do you want with the hat ? ”

“ I want to see the lining.”

“ There is no lining,” replied the prisoner, grasping it still tighter.

“ Let me look at it, nevertheless. Take it from him,” rejoined the officer. “ Ah, ha ! here is a little ragged bit of lining, though, sticking pretty fast too ; for as loose and as careless as it looks, — a fine, cunning hiding-place ! Give me a knife — a penknife ! ” said the myrmidon of justice, retiring with his knife and the hat to the window, followed by the eager looks of the prisoner, whose attention, however, was immediately called to a nearer danger, by the return of

Louis, with little Bijou in his arms. The poor dog flew at him instantly, barking, growling, quivering, almost shrieking with fury, bit his heels and his legs, and was with difficulty dragged from him, so strong had passion made the faithful creature.

“Look!” said Louis. I brought him from his master’s grave to bear witness against his murderer. Look!”

“Their worships will hardly commit me on the evidence of a dog,” observed Wilson, recovering himself.

“But see here,” rejoined the police-officer, producing two dirty bits of paper, most curiously folded, from the old hat.

“Here are the two Chardley notes — the 10*l.* notes — signed David Williams, Nos. 1025. and 662. What do you say to that evidence? You and the little dog are right, my good boy: this is the murderer, sure enough. There can be no doubt about committing him now.”

It is hardly necessary to add that James Wilson was committed, or that proof upon proof poured in to confirm his guilt and discredit his witnesses. He died confessing the murder; and Bijou and Louis, somewhat appeased by having brought the criminal to justice, found comfort in their mutual affection, and in a tender recollection of their dear old friend and master.

Note. — Not to go back to the dog of Montargis, and other well-attested accounts of murderers detected by dogs, I can bring a living spaniel to corroborate the fact, that these faithful and sagacious animals do seek assistance for their masters when any evil befalls them. The story, as told to me by Bramble’s present mistress, whom I have the great pleasure to reckon amongst my friends, is as follows:—

The blacksmith of a small village in Buckinghamshire went blind, and was prevented from pursuing his occupation. He found, however, a friend in a surgeon of the neighbourhood, a man of singular kindness and benevolence, who employed him to carry out medicines, which he was enabled to do by the aid of a dog and a chain. But old John was a severe master, and of his dogs many died, and many ran away. At last, he had the good fortune to light upon our friend Bramble, a large black-and-white spaniel, of remarkable symmetry and beauty,

with wavy hair, very long ears, feathered legs and a bushy tail, and with sagacity and fidelity equal to his beauty. Under Bramble's guidance, blind John performed his journeys in perfect safety ; wherever the poor dog had been once, he was sure to know his way again ; and he appeared to discover, as if by instinct, to what place his master wished to go. One point of his conduct was peculiarly striking. He constantly accompanied his master to church, and lay there perfectly quiet during the whole service. For three years that he formed regularly one of the congregation, he was never known to move or to make the slightest noise.

One bitter night, old John had been on a journey to Woburn, and not returning at his usual hour, the relations with whom he lived went to bed, as it was not uncommon for the blind man, when engaged on a longer expedition than common, to sleep from home. The cottage accordingly was shut up, and the inhabitants, tired with labour, went to bed and slept soundly. The people at a neighbouring cottage, however, fancied that they heard, during the long winter-night, repeated howlings as of a dog in distress ; and when they rose in the morning, the first thing they heard was, that old John lay dead in a ditch not far from his own door. The poor dog was found close by the body ; and it was ascertained by the marks on the path, that he had dragged his chain backward and forward from the ditch to the cottage, in the vain hope of procuring such assistance as might possibly have saved his master.

Luckily for Bramble, the benevolent surgeon, always his very good friend, was called in to examine if any spark of life remained in the body ; and he having ascertained that poor John was fairly dead, told the story of the faithful dog to his present excellent mistress, with whom Bramble is as happy as the day is long.

It is comfortable to meet with a bit of that justice which, because it is so rare, people call poetical, in real actual life ; and I very believe that in this case Bramble's felicity is quite equal to his merits, high as they undoubtedly are. The only drawback that I have ever heard hinted at, is a tendency on his part to grow over fat ; a misfortune which doubtless results from his present good feed, coming after a long course of starvation.

Now that I am telling stories of dogs, I cannot resist the temptation of recording one [short anecdote of my pet spaniel Dash, a magnificent animal, of whose beauty I have spoken elsewhere, and who really does all but speak himself.

Every May I go to the Silchester woods, to gather wild lilies of the valley. Last year the numbers were, from some cause or other, greatly diminished: the roots, it is true, were there, but so scattered over the beautiful terraces of that unrivalled amphitheatre of woods, and the blossoms so rare, that in the space of several acres, thinly covered with the plants and their finely-lined transparent green leaves, it was difficult to procure half-a-dozen of those delicate flower-stalks hung with snowy bells, and amidst the shifting lights and shadows of the coppice, where the sunbeams seemed to dance through the branches, still more difficult to discover the few that there were. I went searching drearily through the wood, a little weary of seeking and not finding, when Dash, who had been on his own devices after pheasants and hares, returning to me, tired with his sort of sport, began to observe mine; and at once discerning my object and my perplexity, went gravely about the coppice, lily hunting; finding them far more quickly than I did, stopping, wagging his tail, and looking round at me by the side of every flower, until I came and gathered it; and then, as soon as I had secured one, pursuing his search after another, and continuing to do so without the slightest intermission until it was time to go home. I am half afraid to tell this story, although it is as true as that there are lilies in Silchester wood; and the anecdote of Cowper's dog Beau and the water-lily is somewhat of a case in point. Whether Dash found the flowers by scent or by sight, I cannot tell; probably by the latter.

THE TAMBOURINE.

A CHEESE-FAIR ADVENTURE.

EVERYBODY likes a fair. Some people indeed, especially of the order called fine ladies, pretend that they do not. But go to the first that occurs in their neighbourhood, and there, amongst the thickest of the jostling crowd, with staring carters treading upon their heels, and grinning farmers' boys rubbing against their petticoats,—there, in the very middle of the confusion, you shall be sure to find them, fine ladies though they be! They still, it is true, cry “How disagreeable!”—but there they are.

Now, the reasons against liking a fair are far more plausible than any that can be alleged on the other side: the dirt, the wet, the sun, the rain, the wind, the noise, the cattle, the crowd, the cheats, the pickpockets, the shows with nothing worth seeing, the stalls with nothing worth buying, the danger of losing your money, the certainty of losing your time,—all these are valid causes for dislike; whilst in defence of the fair there is little more to plead than the general life of the scene, the pleasure of looking on so many happy faces, the consciousness that one day at least in the year is the peasant's holiday—and the undeniable fact, that, deny it as they may, all English people, even the cold fine lady, or the colder fine gentleman, do at the bottom of their hearts like a fair. It is a taste, or a want of taste, that belongs to the national temperament, is born with us, grows up with us, and will never be got rid of, let fashion declaim against it as she may.

The great fair at Belford had, however, even higher pretensions to public favour than a deep-rooted old English feeling. It was a scene of business as well as of amusement, being not only a great market for horses and cattle, but one of the principal marts for the celebrated cheese of the great dairy counties. Factors from the West and dealers from London arrived days before the actual fair-day; and waggon after waggon, laden with the round, hard, heavy merchandise, rumbled slowly into the Forbury, where the great space before the school-house, the whole of the boys' play-ground, was

fairly covered with stacks of Cheddar and North Wilts. Fancy the singular effect of piles of cheeses several feet high, extending over a whole large cricket-ground, and divided only by narrow paths littered with straw, amongst which wandered the busy chapmen, offering a taste of their wares to their cautious customers the country shopkeepers (who poured in from every village within twenty miles), and the thrifty housewives of the town, who, bewildered by the infinite number of samples which, to an uneducated palate, seemed all alike, chose at last almost at random. Fancy the effect of this remarkable scene, surrounded by cattle, horses, shows, and people, the usual moving picture of a fair; the fine Gothic church of St. Nicholas on one side; the old arch of the abbey, and the abrupt eminence called Forbury Hill, crowned by a grand clump of trees, on the other; the Mall, with its row of old limes and its handsome houses, behind; and in front, the great river flowing slowly through green meadows, and backed by the high ridge of Oxfordshire hills; — imagine this brilliant panorama, and you will not wonder that the most delicate ladies braved the powerful fumes of the cheese — an odour so intense that it even penetrated the walls and windows of the school-house — to contemplate the scene. When lighted up at night, it was perhaps still more fantastic and attractive, particularly before the Zoological gardens had afforded a home to the travelling wild beasts, whose roars and howlings at feeding-time used to mingle so grotesquely with the drums, trumpets and fiddles of the dramatic and equestrian exhibitions, and the laugh and shout and song of the merry visitors.

A most picturesque scene, of a truth, was the Belford cheese-fair; and not always unprofitable: at least, I happen to know one instance, where, instead of having his pocket picked by the light-fingered gentry, whom mobs of all sorts are sure to collect, an honest person of my acquaintance was lucky enough to come by his own again, and recover in that unexpected place a piece of property of which he had been previously defrauded.

The case was as follows: —

The male part of our little establishment consists not of one man-servant, as is usual with persons of small fortune and some gentility, who keep, like that other poor and genteel personage yclept Don Quixote, a horse and a brace of grey-

hounds (to say nothing of my own pony phaeton and my dog Dash), but of two boys—the one a perfect pattern of a lad of fifteen or thereabouts, the steadiest, quietest, and most serviceable youth that ever bore the steady name of John; the other an urchin called Ben, some two years younger, a stunted dwarf, or rather a male fairy—Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, for instance—full of life and glee, and good-humour, and innocent mischief—a tricky spirit, difficult to manage, but kindly withal, and useful after his own fashion, though occasionally betrayed into mistakes by over-shrewdness, just as other boys blunder from stupidity. Instead of conveying a message word for word as delivered, according to the laudable practice of the errand gods and goddesses, the Mercurys and Irises in Homer's immortal poems, Master Ben hath a trick of thinking for his master, and clogging his original missive with certain amendments or additional clauses hatched in his own fertile brain.

Occasionally, also, he is rather super-subtle in his rigid care of his master's interest, and exercises an over-scrupulous watchfulness in cases where less caution would be more agreeable. At this very last fair, for instance, we had a horse to sell, which was confided to a neighbouring farmer to dispose of, with the usual charges against being overreached in his bargain, or defrauded of the money when sold. "I'll see to that," responded Ben, taking the words out of the mouth of the slow, civil farmer Giles—"I'll see to that; I'm to ride the mare, and nobody shall get her from me without the money." Off they set accordingly, and the horse, really a fine animal, was speedily sold to a neighbouring baronet, a man of large estate in the county, who sent his compliments to my father, and that he would call and settle for him in a day or two. This message perfectly satisfied our chapman the farmer, but would by no means do for Ben, who insisted on receiving the money before delivering the steed; and after being paid by a check on the county banker, actually rode to the bank to make sure of the cash before he would give up his charge, either to the amazed Sir Robert or his wondering groom. "I suppose, Ben, you did not know Sir Robert?" inquired his master, rather scandalised; when Ben, finding him out in the fair, handed him the money triumphantly, and told his story. "Lord, sir," rejoined Ben, "I knew him as

well as I know you ; but great people's money is sometimes as hard to get as poor ones' ; besides, this Sir Robert is a prodigal chap, dresses as smart and talks as fine as his valet — 'twas best to secure the cash if he were ten times over a baronet. You can tell him, though, that I did not know him, if you like, sir, the next time you meet." And the white fib was told accordingly, and the affront happily got over.

This fact, however illustrative of Master Ben's general character, has nothing to do with our present story, though, as the *dénouement* of the tambourine adventure took place on the same day, the two legends may be considered as in some small degree connected.

Amongst Ben's other peculiarities was a strong faculty of imitation, which he possessed in common with monkeys, magpies, and other clever and mischievous animals ; but which, in his particular case, applied as it generally was to copying, so correct a model as John served as a sort of counterpoise to his more volatile propensities, something like the ballast to the ship, or the balance-wheel to the machinery. The point to which this was carried was really ludicrous. If you saw John in the garden carrying a spade, you were pretty sure to see Ben following him armed with a rake. When John watered my geraniums after the common fashion of pouring water into the pots, Ben kept close behind him, with a smaller implement, pouring the refreshing element into the pans. Whilst John washed one wheel of my pony phaeton, Ben was, at the self-same moment, washing another. Were a pair of shoes sent to be blacked, so sure as John assumed the brush to polish the right shoe, Ben took possession of the left. He cleaned the forks to John's knives ; and if a coat were to be beaten, you were certain to hear the two boys thumping away at once on different sides.

Of course, if this propensity were observable in their work, it became infinitely more so in their amusements. If John played marbles, so did Ben ; if cricket, there, in the same game, and on the same side, was Ben. If the one went a nutting, you were sure in the self-same copse to find his faithful adherent ; and when John, last winter, bought a fiddle and took to learning music, it followed, as a matter of necessity, that Ben should become musical also. The only difficulty was the choice of an instrument. A fiddle was out of the

question, not only because the price was beyond his finances, and larger than any probable sum out of which he could reasonably expect to coax those who wrongfully enough were accused of spoiling him—the young gentleman being what is vulgarly called spoiled long before he came into their hands—but because Master Ben had a very rational and well-founded doubt of his own patience (John, besides his real love of the art, being naturally of a plodding disposition, widely different from the mercurial temperament of his light-hearted and light-headed follower), and desired to obtain some implement of sound (for he was not very particular as to its sweetness), on which he might with all possible speed obtain sufficient skill to accompany his comrade in his incessant, and at first most untunable, practice.

Ben's original trial was on an old battered flageolet, bestowed upon him by the ostler at the Rose, for whom he occasionally performed odd jobs, which at first was obstinately mute in spite of all his blowings, and when it did become vocal under his strenuous efforts, emitted such a series of alternate shrieks, and groans, and squeaks, as fairly frightened the neighbourhood, and made John stop his ears. So Ben found it convenient to put aside that instrument, which, in spite of the ostler's producing from it a very respectable imitation of "Auld Lang Syne," Ben pronounced to be completely good for nothing.

His next attempt was on a flute, which looked sufficiently shapeable and glittering to have belonged to a far higher performer, and which was presented to him by our excellent neighbour Mr. Murray's smart footman, who being often at our house with notes and messages from his mistress, had become captivated, like his betters, by Ben's constant gaiety and good humour—the delightful festivity of temper and fearless readiness of wit, which rendered the poor country-boy so independent, so happy, and so enviable. Mr. Thomas presented his superb flute to Ben—and Ben tried for three whole days to make it utter any sound—but, alas! he tried in vain. So he honestly and honourably returned the gift to Mr. Thomas, with a declaration "that he had no doubt but the flute was an excellent flute, only that he had not breath to play on it; he was afraid of his lungs." Ben afraid of his lungs! whose voice could be heard of a windy day from one

end of the village street to the other — ay, to the very hill-top, rising over all the din of pigs, geese, children, carriages, horses, and cows! Ben in want of breath! Ben! whose tongue, during the whole four-and-twenty hours, was never still for a moment, except when he was asleep, and who even stood suspected of talking in his dreams! Ben in want of breath! However, he got out of the scrape, by observing, that it was only common civility to his friend, Mr. Thomas, to lay the fault on himself rather than on the flute, which, as Ben sagaciously, and, I think, truly observed, was like the razors of the story, “made for sale and not for use.”

The next experiment was more successful.

It so happened that a party of gipsies had pitched their tent and tethered their donkeys in Kibes Lane, and fowls were disappearing from the henroost, and linen vanishing from the clothes-line, as is usual where an encampment of that picturesque* but slippery order of vagabonds takes place. The party in question consisted as usual of tall, lean, suspicious-looking men, an aged sibyl or two of fortune-telling aspect, two or three younger women with infants at their backs, and children of all ages and sizes, from fifteen downwards. One lad, apparently about our hero's age, but considerably larger, had struck up an acquaintance with Ben (who used to pass that way to fetch a dole of milk from our kind neighbours the Murrays, and usually took his master's greyhounds with him for company), and had made sufficient advances towards familiarity to challenge him to a coursing expedition, promising that their curs should find hares, provided the greyhounds would catch them; and even endeavouring to pique him on the point of honour (for Ben was obviously proud of his beautiful and high-bred dogs), by insinuating that the game

* Besides their eminent picturesqueness, there is a poetical feeling about these wandering tribes, that can hardly fail to interest. The following anecdote, illustrative of this fact, is new to me, and may be so to my readers:—One fine spring morning, a friend of mine saw a young gipsy-girl jumping and clapping her hands, and shouting to an elderly female, “I have done it! I have done it!” — “Done what?” inquired my friend. — “Set my foot on nine daisies at once, ma'am,” was the reply; and then she and the elder one began chanting a song, the burden of which was, as nearly as their auditress could recollect, as follows:—

“Summer is come,
With the daisy bud,
To gladden our tents
By the merry green wood,
Summer is come! Summer is come!”

might be more easily found than caught. Ben, however, too conversant with the game-laws to fall into the snare, laughed at the gipsy-boy, and passed quietly on his way.

The next day, Dick (for such was the name of his new acquaintance) made an attack upon Ben, after a different fashion, and with a more favourable result.

Perched on a knoll, under a fine clump of oaks, at a turning of the lane, stood the young gipsy, beating the march in Blue-beard, with the most approved flourishes, on a tambourine of the largest size. Ben was enchanted. He loitered to listen, stopped to admire, proceeded to question Dick as to the ownership of the instrument, and on finding that this splendid implement of noise was the lad's own property, and to be sold to the best bidder, commenced a chaffering and bargaining, which in its various modifications of beating down on one side, and crying up on the other, and pretended indifference on both, lasted five days and a half, and finally became the happy possessor of the tambourine, for the sum of four shillings — half a guinea having been the price originally demanded.

Who now so triumphant as Ben ! The tambourine (though greatly the worse for wear) was still a most efficient promoter of din, and for four-and-twenty hours (for I really believe that during the first night of its belonging to him the boy never went to bed) it was one incessant tornado of beating, jingling, and rumbling — the whole house was deafened by the intolerable noise which the enraptured tambourinist was pleased to call music. At the end of that time the parchment (already pretty well worn) fairly cracked, as well it might, under such unmerciful pommelling, and a new head, as Ben called it, became necessary. It had been warranted to wear for six months, under pain of forfeiting eighteen-pence by the former possessor ; but on repairing to Kibe's Lane, Dick and his whole tribe, tents, donkeys, and curs, had disappeared, and the evil was so far without remedy. The purchaser had exhausted his funds ; everybody was too much out of humour with the noise to think of contributing money to promote its renewal, and any other boy would have despaired.

But Ben was a lad of resource. Amongst his various friends and patrons, he numbered the groom of an eminent solicitor in Belford, to whom he stated his case, begging him to procure for him some reversionary parchment, stained, or blotted, or

discoloured, or what not— anything would do, so that it were whole ; and the groom was interested, and stated the case to the head clerk ; and the clerk was amused, and conveyed the petition to his master ; and the master laughed, and sent Ben forthwith a cancelled deed ; and the tambourine was mended ; and for another four-and-twenty hours we were stunned.

At the end of that time, having laid down the instrument from pure weariness, his left arm being stiff from holding and tossing, and his right knuckles raw from thumping, Ben deposited his beloved treasure in a nook which he had especially prepared for it in the stable ; and on going to pay it a visit the next morning, the dear tambourine was gone — vanished — stolen — lost, as we all thought, for ever ! and poor Ben was so grieved at the loss of his plaything, that, nuisance as the din had been, we could not help being sorry too, and had actually commissioned him to look out for another second-hand instrument, and promised to advance the purchase-money, when the aspect of affairs was suddenly changed by the adventure before alluded to, which occurred at the great cheese-fair at Belford.

After receiving the money from Sir Robert — or rather, after getting his check cashed at the bank, and delivering the horse to the groom, as I have before stated — Ben having transferred the notes to his master, and received half-a-crown to purchase a fairing, proceeded to solace himself by taking a leisurely view of the different shows, and having laughed at punch, stared at the wild beasts, and admired the horsemanship, was about to enter a booth, to enjoy the delight of a threepenny play, when, on a platform in front, where the characters, in full costume, were exhibiting themselves to attract an audience to the entertainment about to commence, he was struck by the apparition of a black boy in a turban, flourishing a tambourine, and in spite of the change of colour in the player, and a good deal of new gilding on the instrument, was instantly convinced that he beheld his quondam friend Dick the gipsy, and his own beloved tambourine !

Ben was by no means a person to suffer such a discovery to pass unimproved ; he clambered on the railing that surrounded the booth, leaped on the platform, seized at one clutch the instrument and the performer, and in spite of the resistance offered by a gentleman in a helmet and spangles, a most

Amazonian lady in a robe and diadem, and a personage, sex unknown, in a pair of silver wings, gold trousers, and a Brutus wig, he succeeded in mastering the *soi-disant* negro-boy, and raising such a clamour as brought to his assistance a troop of constables and other officials, and half the mob of the fair.

Ben soon made known his grievance. "He's no blackamoor!" shouted the lad, dexterously cleaning with a wetted finger part of the cheek of the simulated African, and discovering the tanned brown skin underneath. "He's a thief and a gipsy! And this is my tambourine! I can prove the fact!" roared Ben. "I can swear to the parchment, and so can lawyer Lyons," added Ben (displaying the mutilated but clerk-like writing, by which Simon Lackland, Esq., assigned over to Daniel Holdfast, Gent., the manor and demesnes, woods and fisheries, park-lands and pightles, of Flyaway, in consideration, and so forth). "I can swear to my tambourine, and so can my master, and so can the lawyer! Take us to the bench! Carry us before the mayor! I can swear to the tambourine, and the thief who is playing it, who is no more a negro than I am!" pursued Ben, sweeping off another streak of the burnt cork from the sunburnt face of the luckless Dick. "I'm Doctor M.'s boy," bawled Ben, "and he'll see me righted, and the tambourine's mine, and I'll have it!"

And have it he did; for the lawyer and his master both happened to be within hearing, and bore satisfactory testimony to his veracity; and the mob, who love to administer summary justice, laid hold of the culprit, whom Ben, having recovered his property, was willing to let off scot-free, and amused themselves with very literally washing the blackamoor white by means of a sound ducking in the nearest horse-pond. And the tambourine was brought home in triumph; and we are as much stunned as ever.

MRS. HOLLIS, THE FRUITERER.

AT the corner of St. Stephen's church-yard, forming a sort of angle at the meeting of four roads, stands a small shop, the front abutting on the open space caused by the crossing of the streets, one side looking into the Butts, the other into the church-yard, and one end only connected with other houses ; a circumstance which, joined to the three open sides being, so to say, glazed—literally composed of shop-windows, gives an agreeable singularity to the little dwelling of our fruiterer. By day it looks something like a greenhouse, or rather, like the last of a row of stove-houses ; and the resemblance is increased by the contents of the shop-windows, consisting of large piled-up plates of every fruit in season, interspersed with certain pots of plants which, in that kind of atmosphere, never blow, — outlandish plants, names unknown, whose green, fleshy, regular leaves have a sort of fruity-look with them, seem as if intended to be eaten, and assort wonderfully well with the shaddocks, dates, cocoa-nuts, pine-apples, and other rare and foreign fruits, amongst which they stand. By night it has the air of a Chinese lantern, all light and colour ; and whether by night or by day, during full eight months of the year, that ever-open door sends forth the odours of countless chests of oranges, with which above all other productions of the earth the little shop is filled, and which come streaming across the pavement like a perfume.

I have an exceeding affection for oranges and the smell of oranges in every shape : the leaf, the flower, the whole flowering tree, with its exquisite elegance*, its rare union of richness

* So elegant is it, that the very association connected with it will sometimes confer a grace not its own. For instance, an indifferent play called *Elvira*, taken from the Spanish some two hundred years ago by George Digby, Earl of Bristol, is really made tasteful by the scene being laid partly amongst the orange-groves of a Spanish garden, and partly in the "perfuming room," a hall, or laboratory, where the flowers were distilled, and in which the mistress sets one of her attendants, a lady in disguise, the pretty task of gathering and changing the flowers. No one can conceive the effect of this tasteful fixing of the scene, in heightening and ennobling the female characters. Our own greenhouses were originally built for tender ever-greens, chiefly oranges and myrtles ; and an orangery is still one of the rarest and most elegant appurtenances to a great house. Some of my happiest days were spent

and delicacy, and its aristocratic scarcity and unwillingness to blossom, or even to grow in this climate, without light and heat, and shelter and air, and all the appliances which its sweetness and beauty so well deserve. I even love that half-evergreen, flexible honeysuckle, with the long wreaths of flowers, which does condescend to spread and flourish, and even to blow for half the year, all the better, because its fragrance approaches nearer to that of the orange blossom than any other that I know: and the golden fruit with its golden rind, I have loved both for the scent and the taste from the day when a tottering child, laughing and reaching after the prize which I had scarcely words enough to ask for, it was doled out to me in quarters, through the time when, a little older, I was promoted to the possession of half an orange to my own share, and that still prouder hour when I attained the object of my ambition, and had a whole orange to do what I liked with, up to this very now, when, if oranges were still things to sigh for, I have only to send to Mrs. Hollis's shop, and receive in return for one shilling, lawful money of Great Britain, more of the golden fruit than I know what to do with. Everybody has gone through this chapter of the growth and vanity of human wishes — has longed for the fruit, not only for its own sweetness, but as a mark of property and power, which vanish when possessed — great to the child, to the woman nothing. But I still love oranges better and care for them more than grown people usually do, and above all things I like the smell; the rather, perhaps, that it puts me in mind of the days when, at school in London, I used to go to the play so often, and always found the house scented with the quantity of orange-peel in the pit, so that to this hour that particular fragrance brings John Kemble to my recollection. I certainly like it the better on that account, and as certainly, although few persons can be less like the great tragedian — glorious John! — as certainly I like it none the worse for recalling to my mind my friend Mrs. Hollis.*

As long as I can recollect, Mrs. Hollis has been the inhabitant of this grand depôt of choice fruits, the inmate not

in that belonging to Belford Manor-house, looking out from amid orange-trees, second only to those at Hampton Court, on gay flowers, green trees, and a bright river, in the sunny month of June, and enjoying society worthy of the scenery.

* My friend Mr. Jerrold has added still another theatrical association by his imitable creation of Orange Moll — a pleasant extravagance worthy of Middleton.

so much of the house as of the shop. I never, with one signal exception, saw her out of that well-glazed apartment, nor did I ever see the shop without her. She was as much a fixture there as one of her flowerless plants, and seemed as little subject to change or decay in her own person. From seven o'clock, when it was opened, till nine, when the shutters were closed, there she sat in one place, from whence she seldom stirred, a chair behind the right-hand counter, where she could conveniently reach her most tempting merchandise, and hold discourse with her friends and customers (terms which in her case were nearly synonymous), even although they advanced no nearer towards the sanctum than the step at the door. There she has presided, the very priestess of that temple of Pomona, for more years than I can well reckon — from her youth (if ever she were young) to now, when, although far from looking so, she must, I suppose, according to the register, be accounted old. What can have preserved her in this vigorous freshness, unless it be the aroma of the oranges, nobody can tell. There she sits, a tall, stout, square, upright figure, surmounted by a pleasant comely face, eyes as black as a sloe, cheeks as round as an apple, and a complexion as ruddy as a peach, as fine a specimen of a healthy, hearty English tradeswoman, the feminine of "John Bull," as one would desire to see on a summer day.

One circumstance which has probably contributed not a little to that want of change in her appearance, which makes people who have been away from Belford for twenty years or more declare that every thing was altered except Mrs. Hollis, but that she and her shop were as if they had left it only yesterday, is undoubtedly her singular adherence to one style of dress—a style which in her youth must have had the effect of making her look old, but which now, at a more advanced period of life, suits her exactly. Her costume is very neat, and as it never can have been at any time fashionable, has the great advantage of never looking old-fashioned. Fancy a dark gown, the sleeves reaching just below the elbow, cotton in summer, stuff or merino in winter, with dark mittens to meet the sleeves; a white double muslin handkerchief outside of the gown, and a handsome shawl over that, pinned so as not to meet in front; a white apron, a muslin cap with a highish formal crown, a plaited muslin border trimmed with narrow

edging (I dare say she never wore such a gewgaw as a bit of net in her life), a plaited *chinnum* to match fastened to the cap at either ear, and a bit of sober-coloured satin ribbon pinned round, without bow or any other accompaniment; imagine all this delicately neat and clean, and you will have some notion of Mrs. Hollis. There is a spice of coquetry in this costume — at least there would be if adopted with malice prepense, it is so becoming. But as she is probably wholly unconscious of its peculiar allurements, she has the advantage without the sin, the charm “without the illness should attend it.”

Nobody that knew Mrs. Hollis would suspect her of coquetry, or of anything implying design or contrivance of any sort. She was a thorough plain and simple-minded woman, honest and open in word and deed, with an uncompromising freedom of speech, and a directness and singleness of purpose which answer better, even as regards worldly prosperity, than the cunning or the cautious would allow themselves to believe. There was not a bolder talker in all Belford than Mrs. Hollis, who saw in the course of the day people of all ranks, from my lord in his coronet carriage, to the little boys who came for ha’porths or penn’orths of inferior fruits (judiciously preferring the liberality and civility of a great shop to the cheaterly and insolence of the inferior chapwoman, who makes money by the poor urchins, and snubs them all the while): from the county member’s wife to the milk-woman’s daughter, everybody dealt with Mrs. Hollis, and with all of them did Mrs. Hollis chat with a mixture of good humour and good spirits, of perfect ease and perfect respectfulness, which made her one of the most popular personages in the town. As a gossip she was incomparable. She knew everybody and everything, and everything about everybody; had always the freshest intelligence and the newest news; her reports, like her plums, had the bloom on them, and she would as much have scorned to palm upon you an old piece of scandal as to send you strawberries that had been two days gathered. Moreover, considering the vast quantity of chit-chat of which she was the channel (for it was computed that the whole gossip of Belford passed through her shop once in four-and-twenty hours, like the blood through the heart), it was really astonishing how authentic on the whole her intelligence was; mistakes

and mis-statements of course there were, and a plentiful quantity of exaggeration ; but of actual falsehood there was comparatively little, and of truth, or of what approached to truth, positively much. If one told a piece of news out of Mrs. Hollis's shop, it was almost an even wager that it was substantially correct. And of what other gossip-shop can one make a similar declaration ?

Chit-chat, however, eminently as she excelled in it, was not the sort of discourse which Mrs. Hollis preferred. Her taste lay in higher topics. She was a keen politician, a zealous partizan, a red-hot reformer, and to declaim against taxes and tories, and poor-rates and ministers — subjects which she handled as familiarly as her pippins — was the favourite pastime of our fruiterer. Friend or foe made little difference with this free-spoken lady, except that perhaps she preferred the piquancy of a good-humoured skirmish with a political adversary to the flatness of an agreement with a political ally ; and it is saying not a little for tory good-humour, that her antagonists listened and laughed, and bought her grapes and oranges just as quietly after a diatribe of her fashion as before. I rather think that they liked her oratory better than the whigs did — it amused them.

A contested election turns her and her shop topsy-turvy. One wonders how she lives through the excitement, and how she contrives to obtain and exhibit the state of the poll almost as it seems before the candidates themselves can know the numbers. It even puts her sober-suited attire out of countenance. Green and orange being the colours of her party, she puts on two cockades of that livery, which suit as ill with her costume as they would with that of a Quaker ; she hoists a gay flag at her door, and sticks her shop all over with oranges and laurel-leaves, so that it vies in decoration with the member's chair ; and in return for this devotion, the band at an election time make a halt of unusual duration before her door (to the great inconvenience of the innumerable stage-coaches and other vehicles which pass that well-frequented corner, which, by the way, is the high road to London), and the mob, especially that part of it which consists of little boys and girls, with an eye to a dole of nuts or cherries, bestow upon her almost as many cheers as they would inflict upon the candidate himself.

At these times Mr. Hollis (for there was such a personage, short and thick and very civil) used to make his appearance in the shop, and to show his adhesion to the cause by giving a plumper to its champion ; on other occasions he was seldom visible, having an extensive market-garden to manage in the suburbs of the town, and being for the most part engaged in trotting to and fro between Mount Pleasant and the Church-yard corner, the faithful reporter of his wife's messages and orders. As you might be certain at any given hour to find Mrs. Hollis at her post behind the counter — for little as she looked like a person who lived without eating, she never seemed to retire for the ordinary purposes of breakfast or dinner, and even managed to talk scandal without its usual accompaniment of tea—so sure were you to see her quiet steady husband (one of the best-natured and honestest men in the place) on the full trot from the garden to the shop, or the shop to the garden, with a huge fruit-basket on one arm, and his little granddaughter Patty on the other.

Patty Hollis was the only daughter of our good fruiterers' only son ; and her parents having died in her infancy, she had been reared with the tenderness which is usually bestowed on the only remaining scion of a virtuous and happy family in that rank of life. Her grandfather especially idolized her ; made her the constant companion of his many walks to the garden on the side of Mount Pleasant, and installed her, before she was twelve years of age, leader of the fruit-pickers, and superintendent of the gardeners : offices in which she so conducted herself as to give equal satisfaction to the governors and the governed, the prince and the people. Never was vice-queen more popular, or more fortunate, both in her subjects and her territory.

It would have been difficult to find a prettier bit of ground than this market-garden, with its steep slopes and romantic hollows, its groves of fruit-trees, its thickets of berry-bushes, and its carpets of strawberries. Quite shut out from the town by the sudden and precipitous rise of the hill, it opened to a charming view of the Kennet, winding through green meadows, and formed in itself, with its troop of active labourers, men, women, and girls, a scene of great animation ; and during the time of the pearly pear-blossom, the snowy cherry, and the rosy apple-blossom, and again in the fruit season (for

next to flowers, fruit is the prettiest of all things), a scene of great beauty. There was one barberry-bush, standing by itself on the top of a knoll of strawberries, which was really a picture.

But by far the most beautiful part of that pleasant scene was the young fruit-gatherer, Patty Hollis. Her complexion, a deep rich brown, with lips like the fruit of her favourite barberry-tree, and cheeks coloured like damask roses, suited her occupation. It had a sweet sunniness that might have beseemed a vintager, and harmonised excellently with the rich tints of the cherries and currants with which her baskets were so often over-brimmed. She had, too, the clear black eye, with its long lashes, and the dark and glossy hair, which give such brightness to a brown beauty. But the real charm of her countenance was its expression. The smiles, the dimples — the look of sweetness, of innocence, of perfect content, which had been delightful to look upon as a child, were still more delightful, because so much more rare, as she advanced towards womanhood. They seemed, and they were, the result of a character equally charming, frank, gentle, affectionate, and gay.

When about seventeen, this youthful happiness, almost too bright to last, was over-clouded by a great misfortune — the death of her kind grandfather. Poor Patty's grateful heart was almost broken. She had lost one who had loved her better than he had loved anything in the world, or all the world put together; and she felt (as everybody does feel on such an occasion, though with far less cause than most of us) that her own duty and affection had never been half what his fondness for her deserved, — that she had lost her truest and most partial friend, and that she should never be happy again. So deep was her affliction, that Mrs. Hollis, herself much grieved, was obliged to throw aside her own sorrow to comfort her. It was no comfort, but seemed rather an accession of pain, to find that she was what, considering her station, might be called an heiress, — that she would be entitled to some hundreds on her marriage or her coming of age, and that the bulk of the property (accumulated by honest industry and a watchful but not mean frugality) was secured to her after the death of her grandmother.

The trustees to the property and executors of the will, who

were also joined with Mrs. Hollis in the guardianship of her grand-daughter, were our old friend Stephen Lane, his near neighbour and political ally, and another intimate acquaintance, who, although no politician, was a person of great and deserved influence with all those of his own rank who had come in contact with his acuteness and probity.

Andrew Graham* was a Scotch gardener, and one of the very best specimens of a class which unites, in a remarkable degree, honesty, sobriety, shrewdness, and information. Andrew had superadded to his Northern education, and an apprenticeship to a Duke's gardener, the experience of eight years passed as foreman in one of the great nurseries near London; so that his idiom, if not his accent†, was almost entirely Anglicised; and when he came to Belford to superintend the garden and hothouses of a very kind and very intelligent gentleman, who preferred spending the superfluities of a large income on horticultural pursuits, rather than in showier and less elegant ways, he brought into the town as long a head and as sound a heart as could be found in the county. To Mr. Hollis (who had himself begun life as a gentleman's gardener, and who thoroughly loved his art) his society was exceedingly welcome; and he judged, and judged rightly, that to no one could he more safely confide the important trust of advising and protecting two comparatively helpless females, than to the two friends whom he had chosen.

Andrew vindicated his high opinion by advising Mrs. Hollis to resign the garden, (which was held on lease of our other good friend, Mr. Howard,) dispose of the shop (which was

* Of a Northern clan I fancy — not one of those Grahams of the "land debateable," to whom I have the honour of being distantly related, and of whom the Great Minstrel tells, that they stole with a laudable impartiality from both sides of the border. Speaking of the old harper, Albert Græme, Sir Walter says —

"Well friended too, his hardy kin,
Whoever lost, were sure to win;
They sought the beeves that made their broth
In Scotland and in England both."

Lay of the Last Minstrel.

† The accent is not so easily got quit of. A true-born Scot rarely loses that mark of his country, let him live ever so long on this side of the Tweed; and even a Southern sometimes finds it sooner learnt than unlearnt. A gardener of my acquaintance, the head man in a neighbouring nursery-ground, who spoke as good Scotch as heart could desire, and was universally known amongst the frequenters of the garden by the title of the "Scotchman," happened not only to have been born in Hertfordshire, but never to have travelled farther north than that county. He had worked under a gardener from Aberdeen, and had picked up the dialect. Some people do catch peculiarities of tone. I myself once returned from a visit to Northumberland, speaking the Doric of Tynedale like a native, and, from love of "the North_countrie," was really sorry when I lost the pretty imperfection.

her own), take a small house in the suburbs, and live on her property ; and he urged this the rather as he suspected her foreman of paying frequent visits to a certain beer-house, lately established in the neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant, and bearing the insidious sign of “ The Jolly Gardener ;” because, as he observed, “ when an Englishman turned of fifty once takes to the national vice of tippling, you may as well look to raise pine-apples from cabbage-stocks, as expect him to amend. He’ll go to the Jolly Gardener and the rest of the lads will follow him, and the garden may take care of itself. Part with the whole concern, my good lady, and ye are safe — keep it, and ye’ll be cheated.”

Now this was good advice ; and it had the usual fate of good advice, in being instantly and somewhat scornfully rejected. Mrs. Hollis had a high opinion of her foreman, and could not and would not live out of her shop ; and as even Patty pleaded for the garden, though she intimated some suspicion of its manager, the whole concern remained *in statu quo* ; and Andrew, when he saw the smiles return to her lips, and the bloom to her cheeks, and found how much her health and happiness depended on her spending her days in the open air, and in the employment she loved, ceased to regret that his counsel had not been followed, more especially as the head man, having more than verified his prediction, had been discharged, and replaced, according to his recommendation, by a young and clever labourer in the garden.

Sooner than Patty had thought it possible her cheerfulness came back to her ; she half lived at Mount Pleasant, did all she could to assist the new head man, who, although merely a self-taught lad of the neighbourhood, did honour to Andrew’s discrimination, and was beginning to discover (the god of love only knows how) that to be, in a small way, an heiress was no insupportable misfortune, when a vexation arising from that very cause almost made her wish herself really the “ wild wandering gipsy” which her poor grandfather had delighted to call her.

The calamity in question was no trifle. Poor Patty was unfortunate enough to be courted by Mr. Samuel Vicars, hair-dresser and perfumer, in Bristol-street ; and to add to the trial the suitor was the especial favourite of her grandmother,

and his addresses were supported by all her influence and authority.

Mr. Samuel Vicars was one of those busy-bodies who are the pests of a country town. To be a gossip is perhaps permitted to the craft, as inheritors of those old privileged disseminators of news and scandal, the almost extinct race of barbers ; but to be so tittle-tattling, so mischief-making, and so malicious as Mr. Samuel Vicars, is not allowed to anybody ; and the universal ill-will which such a style of conversation indicates is pretty certain to be returned in kind. Accordingly, the young gentleman had contrived to gather around himself as comfortable a mixture of contempt and hatred as one would desire to see on a summer's day.

It was a little, pert, dapper personage, as slight and flimsy as his white apron or his linen jacket, with a face in which all that was not curl and whisker was simper and smirk, a sharp conceited voice, and a fluency, which as it might be accounted a main cause of the thousand and one scrapes into which he was perpetually getting, was almost as unlucky for himself as for his hearers. He buzzed about one like a gnat, all noise and sting and motion, and one wondered, as one does in the case of that impertinent insect, how anything so insignificant could be so troublesome.

Besides the innumerable private quarrels into which his genius for "evil-speaking, lying, and slandering," could not fail to bring him — quarrels the less easily settled, because having a genuine love of litigation, an actual passion for the importance and excitement of a lawsuit, he courted an action for damages, in which he could figure as defendant on the one hand, and blessed his stars for a horsewhipping, in which he shone as plaintiff, on the other ; besides these private disputes, he engaged with the most fiery zeal and the fiercest activity in all the public squabbles of the place, and being unhappily, as Stephen Lane used to observe, of *his* party, and a partisan whom it was morally impossible to keep quiet, contrived to be a greater thorn in the side of our worthy friend than all his opponents put together. Woe to the cause which he advocated ! The plainest case came out one mass of confusion from the curious infelicity of his statements, and right seemed wrong when seen through the misty medium of his astounding

and confounding verbiage. Stephen's contempt for his adherent's orations was pretty much such as a staunch old hound might evince when some young dog, the babbler of the pack, begins to give tongue: — "But, dang it," cried the good butcher, "he brings the cause into contempt too! It's enough to make a man sell himself for a slave," added the poor patriot, in a paroxysm of weariness and indignation, "to hear that chap jabber for three hours about freedom. And the whole world can't stop him. If he would but rat now!" exclaimed the ex-butcher. And doubtless Samuel would have ratted, if anybody would have made it worth his while; but the other party knew the value of such an opponent, and wisely left him in the ranks of opposition, to serve their cause by speaking against it; so Mr. Samuel Vicars continued a Reformer.

It was this circumstance that first recommended him to the notice of Mrs. Hollis, who, herself a perfectly honest and true-hearted woman, took for granted that Samuel was as veracious and single-minded as herself, believed all his puffs of his own speeches, and got nearer to thinking him, what he thought himself, a very clever fellow, than any other person whom he had ever honoured by his acquaintance. Besides the political sympathy, they had one grand tie in a common antipathy. A certain Mrs. Deborah Dean, long a green-grocer in the Butts, and even then taking higher ground than Mrs. Hollis thought at all proper, had recently entered into partnership with a nursery-man, and had opened a magnificent store for seeds, plants, fruit, and vegetables, in Queen Street; and although the increasing size of Belford and the crowded population of the neighbourhood were such as really demanded another shop, and that at the corner of the churchyard continued to have even more customers than its mistress could well manage, yet she had reigned too long over all the fruitage of the town to "bear a *sister* near the throne;" and she hated Mrs. Deborah (who besides was a "blue") with a hatred truly feminine — hot, angry, and abusive; and the offending party being, as it happened, a mild, civil, obliging woman, poor Mrs. Hollis had had the misfortune to find nobody ready to join in speaking ill of her until she encountered Samuel Vicars, who poured the whole force of his vituperative eloquence on the unfortunate dame. Now Samuel, who had had

some pecuniary dealings with her whilst she lived in his neighbourhood — certain barterings of cabbages, celery, carrots, and French beans, against combs and tooth-brushes, and a Parisian front, which had led first to a disputed account, and then to the catastrophe in which he most delighted, a lawsuit — was charmed on his side to meet with what seldom came in his way, a sympathising listener. He called every day to descant on the dear subject, and feed Mrs. Hollis's hatred with fresh accounts of her rival's insolence and prosperity ; and in the course of his daily visits it occurred to him that she was well to do in the world, and that he could not do a better thing than to cast the eyes of affection on her pretty granddaughter.

Samuel's own affairs were exceedingly in want of a rich wife. What with running after *la chose publique*, and neglecting his own affairs — what with the friends that he lost and the enemies that he gained by the use of that mischievous weapon, his tongue — to say nothing of the many lawsuits in which he was cast, and those scarcely less expensive that he won — his concerns were in as much disorder as if he had been a lord. A hairdresser's is at the best a meagre business, especially in a country town, and his had declined so much, that his one apprentice, an idle lad of fourteen, and the three or four painted figures, on which his female wigs were stuck in the windows, had the large showy shop, with its stock of glittering trumpery, pretty much to themselves ; so that Samuel began to pay most assiduous court, not to his fair intended — for, pretty girl as Patty was, our Narcissus of the curling irons was far too much enamoured of himself to dream of falling in love with a pair of cherry cheeks — but to her grandmother ; and having picked up at the Jolly Gardener certain rumours of Mount Pleasant, which he related to his patroness with much of bitterness and exaggeration, awakened such a tempest of wrath in her bosom that she wrote a letter to Mr. Howard, giving him notice that in six months she should relinquish the garden, discharged her new foreman on the spot, and ordered Patty to prepare to marry the hairdresser without let or delay.

Poor Patty ! her only consolation was in her guardians. Her first thought was of Andrew, but *he* was sure to have the evil tidings from another quarter ; besides, of him there could

be no doubt; her only fear was of Stephen Lane. So, as soon as she could escape from the Padrona's scolding, and wipe the tears from her own bright eyes, she set forth for the great shop in the Butts.

"Well, my rosebud!" said the good butcher, kindly chucking his fair ward under the chin; "what's the news with you? Why, you are as great a stranger as strawberries at Christmas! I thought you had taken root at Mount Pleasant, and never meant to set foot in the town again."

"Oh, Mr. Lane!" — began poor Patty, and then her courage failed, and she stopped suddenly and looked down abashed; — "Oh! Mr. Lane!" —

"Well, what's the matter?" inquired her kind guardian; "are you going to be married, and come to ask my consent?"

"Oh, Mr. Lane!" again sighed Patty.

"Out with it, lass! — never fear!" quoth Stephen.

"Oh, Mr. Lane!" once more cried the damsel, stopping as if spellbound, and blushing to her fingers' ends.

"Well, Patty, if you can't speak to a friend that has dandled you in his arms, and your father before you, you'd best send the lad to see what he can say for himself. I shan't be cruel, I promise you. Though you might do better in the way of money, I would rather look to character. That's what tells in the long-run, and I like the chap."

"Oh, Mr. Lane, God forbid!" exclaimed Patty; "my grandmother wants me to marry Samuel Vicars!"

"Sam Vicars! the woman's mad!" ejaculated Stephen.

"She cannot be other than demented," observed Andrew, who had just entered the shop, "for she has discharged Laurence Reid — the steadiest and cleverest lad that ever came about a garden, a lad who might be taken for a Scotchman — and wants to marry Miss Patty to a loon of a hair-dresser."

"Whom anybody would take for a Frenchman," interrupted the butcher; and having thus summed up the characters of the two rivals in a manner that did honour no less to their warm feelings than to their strong prejudices, the two guardians and their fair ward, much comforted by the turn the conversation had taken, began to consult as to their future proceedings.

"She must give up the garden, since she has sent Mr.

Howard notice," quoth Andrew; "but that won't much signify. This is only the beginning of January; but Christmas being passed, the notice will date from Lady-day, so that she'll keep it till Michaelmas, and will have plenty of opportunity to miss Laurence Reid's care and skill, and honesty"——

"But poor Laurence, what will become of him?" interposed his fair mistress: "Laurence to be turned away at a day's warning, like a drunkard or a thief! What will he do?"

"Just as a very industrious and very clever gardener always does. He'll prosper, depend upon it. And besides, my dear, to tell ye a bit of a secret, your good friend Mr. Howard, who likes Laurence so well, has given him an acre and a half of his cottage allotments, in capital order, and partly stocked, which happened to fall vacant just as it was wanted. And you must wait quietly, my bonny lass, and see what time will do for ye. Laurence is three-and-twenty, and ye are nineteen — ye have a long life before ye — wait and see what'll turn up. Mr. Howard is one of the best men in the world, although he has the ill luck to be a Tory," pursued Andrew, with a sly glance at Stephen.

"Never a better, for all he had the misfortune to be born on this side of the Tweed," responded Stephen, returning the glance, with one of his most knowing nods.

"Mr. Howard is your staunch friend," pursued Andrew; "and as for your grandmother, she's a good woman too, and will soon be sick of that jackanapes, if she be only left to find him out herself. So go home, my bonny doo, and be comforted," said the kind-hearted Scotchman, patting the round cheek to which the colour and the dimples were returning under the reviving influence of hope.

"Ay, get along home, rosebud," added the equally kind Englishman, chucking her under the chin, and giving her a fatherly kiss, "get along home, for fear they should miss you. And as to being married to that whipper-snapper with his curls and his whiskers, why, if I saw the slightest chance of such a thing, I'd take him between my finger and thumb, and pitch him up to the top of St. Stephen's tower before you could say Jack Robinson! Get along, rosebud! I'll not see thee made unhappy, I promise thee."

And much consoled by these kind promises, poor Patty stole back to the little shop at the corner of the church-yard.

The winter, the spring, and the summer, crept slowly by, bringing with them a gradual amelioration of prospect to our nutbrown maid. Time, as Andrew had predicted, had done much to sicken Mrs. Hollis of the proposed alliance. Her honest and simple nature, and her real goodness of heart, soon revolted at Samuel's bitterness and malice, and enduring enmities. Her animosities, which vanished almost as she gave them utterance, had no sympathy with such eternity of hatred. Even her rival and competitor, Mrs. Dean, had been forgiven, as soon as she discovered that the world (her own little world of Belford) had room enough for both, and that by adding the superior sorts of vegetables to her stock, with the very finest of which she was supplied through the medium of Andrew Graham, she had actually increased the number of her customers and the value of her business, which, in spite of her having given notice of quitting the garden (a measure which Patty suspected her of regretting), she had determined to continue. She was weary, too, of his frivolity, his idleness and his lies, and having taken upon her to lecture him on his several sins of gadding, tattling, meddle-making and so forth, even intimating some distrust of his oratorical powers and his political importance, Mr. Samuel began to be nearly as tired of his patroness as his patroness was of him; so that, although no formal breach had taken place, Patty felt herself nearly rid of that annoyance.

In the meanwhile, a new attraction, particularly interesting to the gardening world, had arisen in Belford, in the shape of a Horticultural Society. Nothing could be more beautiful than the monthly shows of prize flowers, fruits, and vegetables in the splendid Town-hall. All the county attended them, and our country belles never showed to so much advantage as side by side by their rivals the flowers, giving themselves up with their whole hearts to a delighted admiration of the loveliest productions of Nature. Andrew Graham was of course one of the most successful competitors, and Mr. Howard one of the most zealous and intelligent patrons of the society, whilst even our friend Stephen took some concern in the matter, declaring that good cabbage was no bad accompaniment to good beef, and that every wearer of the blue apron, whether butcher or gardener, had a claim to his affection—a classification at which Andrew, who had a high veneration for

the dignity of his art, was not a little scandalised. Patty from the first had been an enthusiastic admirer of the whole plan, and Mrs. Hollis had been bribed into liking it (for old people do not spontaneously take to novelties, especially in their own pursuits,) by the assurance of Andrew that the choice fruit and vegetables, the rare Carolina beans and green Indian corn — the peas and strawberries so very early and so very late, so large of size and delicate of flavour — the lettuces and cauliflowers unmatched in whiteness and firmness, and a certain new melon which combined all the merits of all the melons hitherto known, came exclusively from one of the prize exhibitors of the horticultural meeting, and should be reserved exclusively for her, if she desired to purchase them. Farther Mrs. Hollis was too discreet to inquire. There are secrets in all trades, and none are more delicate than those regarding the supply of a great fruit-shop. She knew that they did not come from Andrew, for his character set suspicion at defiance; but all his friends might not be equally scrupulous. Silence was safest.

So much had Patty been delighted with the prize-shows, all of which she had attended, as was permitted to respectable tradespeople in the afternoon when the gentry had returned home to dinner, that she had actually excited in Mrs. Hollis a desire to accompany her, and at every meeting the expedition had been threatened, but had gone off, on the score of weather, or of illness, or of business — or, in short, any one of the many excuses which people who seldom go out make to themselves to avoid the exertion, so that the last day arrived and “Yarrow” was still “unvisited.” But that it was the last was a powerful plea with Patty, whose importunity, seconded by a bright sunshiny September evening, and by the gallantry of Mr. Lane, who arrived dressed in his best blue coat and red waistcoat on purpose to escort her, proved irresistible; and Mrs. Hollis, leaving the shop in charge of a trusty maid-servant, an alert shopboy, and a sedate and civil neighbour (a sort of triple guardianship which she considered necessary to supply her own single presence), gave to the inhabitants of Belford the great and unprecedented novelty of seeing her in the streets on a week-day. The people of Thibet would hardly be more astonished at the sight of the Dalai Lama.

On reaching the Town-hall, she was struck even as much as she intended to be with the fragrance and beauty of the hothouse plants, the pines, grapes, peaches, and jars of flowers from the gardens of the gentlemen's seats in the neighbourhood, shown as they were with all the advantages of tasteful arrangement and the magical effect of the evening light. "What a many flowers have been *invented* since I was young!" was her natural thought, clothed in the very words in which it passed through her mind.

She turned, however, from the long rows in which the contributions of the members had been piled, to some smaller tables at the top of the room, filled with the productions of cottage exhibitors. One of these standing a little apart was understood to be appropriated to an individual of this description, a half-taught labourer tilling his own spot of ground, who had never in his life worked in any thing beyond a common market-garden, but who had won almost every prize for which he had contended — had snatched the prizes not only from competitors of his own class, but from the gardeners of the nobility and gentry — had, in short, beaten everybody, even Andrew Graham. To this table Mrs. Hollis turned with peculiar interest — an interest not diminished when she beheld there piled, with a picturesqueness that looked as if copied from Van Huysum, the identical green Indian corn and Carolina beans, the lettuces and cauliflowers, the late peas and autumnal strawberries, and the newest and best of all possible melons, with which she had been so mysteriously supplied, flanked by two jars of incomparable dahlias, and backed by a large white rose, delicate and regular as the *rose de Meaux*, and two seedling geraniums of admirable beauty, labelled "The Mount Pleasant" and "The Patty." By the side of the table stood Andrew Graham, Mr. Howard, and Lawrence Reid.

"The lad has beaten me, Mrs. Hollis, but I forgive him," quoth our friend Andrew, smiling; "I told ye that his wares were the best in the market."

"And you must forgive me, Mrs. Hollis, for having made him your successor in the Mount Pleasant garden," said Mr. Howard. "I have been building a pretty cottage there for him and his wife, when he is fortunate enough to get one;

and now that I see you do walk out sometimes, if you would but come and see it——”

“And if you would but let me give away the bride”——added honest Stephen, seizing Patty’s hand, while the tears ran down her cheeks like rain.

“And if you would but let me manage the garden for you, Mrs. Hollis, and be as a son to you”——said Laurence, pleadingly.

And vanquished at once by natural feeling and professional taste—for the peas, melons, and strawberries had taken possession of her very heart, — Mrs. Hollis yielded. In less than a month the young couple were married, and the very next day Mr. Samuel Vicars ran away from his creditors, whom till then he had pacified by the expectation of his making a wealthy match, and was never heard of in Belford again.

BELLES OF THE BALL-ROOM.

THE WILL.

I now proceed to record some of the more aristocratic belles of the Belford assemblies, the young ladies of the neighbourhood, who, if not prettier than their compeers of the town, were at least more fashionable and more admired.

Nothing in the whole routine of country life seems to me more capricious and unaccountable than the choice of a county beauty. Every shire in the kingdom, from Brobdignaggian York to Lilliputian Rutland, can boast of one. The existence of such a personage seems as essential to the well-being of a provincial community as that of the queen-bee in a hive; and except by some rare accident, when two fair sisters, for instance, of nearly equal pretensions appear in similar dresses at the same balls and the same archery meetings, you as seldom see two queens of Brentford in the one society as the other. Both are elective monarchies, and both tolerably despotic; but so far I must say for the little winged people, that one comprehends the impulse which guides them in the choice

of a sovereign far better than the motives which influence their brother-insects, the beaux: and the reason of this superior sagacity in the lesser swarms is obvious. With them the election rests in a natural instinct, an unerring sense of fitness, which never fails to discover with admirable discrimination the one only she who suits their purpose; whilst the other set of voluntary subjects, the wingless bipeds, are unluckily abandoned to their own wild will, and, although from long habits of imitation almost as unanimous as the bees, seem guided in their admiration by the merest caprice, the veriest chance, and select their goddess, the goddess of beauty, blindfold — as the Bluecoat boys draw, or used to draw, the tickets in a lottery.

Nothing is so difficult to define as the customary qualification of the belle of a country assembly. Face or figure it certainly is not; for take a stranger into the room, and it is at least two to one but he will fix on twenty damsels prettier than the county queen; nor, to do the young gentlemen justice, is it fortune or connection; for, so as the lady come within the prescribed limits of county gentility (which, by the way, are sufficiently arbitrary and exclusive), nothing more is required in a beauty — whatever might be expected in a wife; fortune it is not, still less is it rank, and least of all accomplishments. In short, it seems to me equally difficult to define what is the requisite and what is not; for, on looking back through twenty years to the successive belles of the Belford balls, I cannot fix on any one definite qualification. One damsel seemed to me chosen for gaiety and good humour, a merry, laughing girl; another for haughtiness and airs; one because her father was hospitable, another because her mother was pleasant; one became fashionable because related to a fashionable poet, whilst another stood on her own independent merits as one of the boldest riders in the hunt, and earned her popularity at night by her exploits in the morning.

Among the whole list, the one who commanded the most universal admiration, and seemed to me to approach nearest to the common notion of a pretty woman, was the high-born and graceful Constance Lisle. Besides being a tall elegant figure, with finely chiselled features and a pale but delicate complexion, relieved by large dark eyes full of sensibility, and a profusion of glossy black hair, her whole air and person

were eminently distinguished by that undefinable look of fashion and high breeding, that indisputable stamp of superiority, which, for want of a better word, we are content to call style. Her manners were in admirable keeping with her appearance. Gentle, gracious, and self-possessed; courteous to all and courting none, she received the flattery to which she had been accustomed from her cradle as mere words of course, and stimulated the ardour of her admirers by her calm non-notice infinitely more than a finished coquette would have done by all the *agaceries* of the most consummate vanity.

Nothing is commoner than the affectation of indifference. But the indifference of Miss Lisle was so obviously genuine, that the most superficial coxcomb that buzzed about her could hardly suspect its reality. She heeded admiration no more than that queen of the garden, the lady lily, whom she so much resembled in modest dignity. It played around her as the sunny air of June around the snow-white flower, her common and natural atmosphere.

This was perhaps one reason for the number of beaux who fluttered round Constance. It puzzled and piqued them. They were unused to be of so little consequence to a young lady, and could not make it out. Another cause might perhaps be found in the splendid fortune which she inherited from her mother, and which, independently of her expectations from her father, rendered her the greatest match and richest heiress in the county.

Richard Lisle, her father, a second son of the ancient family of Lisle of Lisle-End, had been one of those men born, as it seems, to fortune, with whom every undertaking prospers through a busy life. Of an ardent and enterprising temper, at once impetuous and obstinate, he had mortally offended his father and elder brother by refusing to take orders and to accept in due season the family livings, which time out of mind had been the provision of the second sons of their illustrious house. Rejected by his relations, he had gone out as an adventurer to India, had been taken into favour by the head-partner of a great commercial house, married his daughter, entered the civil service of the Company, been resident at the court of one native prince and governor of the forfeited territory of another, had accumulated wealth through all the various means by which in India money has been found to

make money, and finally returned to England a widower, with an only daughter, and one of the largest fortunes ever brought from the gorgeous East.

Very different had been the destiny of the family at home. Old Sir Rowland Lisle (for the name was to be found in one of the earliest pages of the baronetage), an expensive, ostentatious man, proud of his old ancestry, of his old place, and of his old English hospitality, was exactly the person to involve any estate, however large its amount; and, when two contests for the county had brought in their train debt and mortgages, and he had recourse to horse-racing and hazard to deaden the sense of his previous imprudence, nobody was astonished to find him dying of grief and shame, a heart-broken and almost ruined man.

His eldest son, Sir Everard, was perfectly free from either of these destructive vices; but he, besides an abundant portion of irritability, obstinacy, and family pride, had one quality quite as fatal to the chance of redeeming his embarrassed fortunes as the electioneering and gambling propensities of his father;—to wit, a love of litigation so strong and predominant that it assumed the form of a passion.

He plunged at once into incessant law-suits with creditor and neighbour, and, in despite of the successive remonstrances of his wife, a high-born and gentle-spirited woman, who died a few years after their marriage, — of his daughter, a strong-minded girl, who, moderately provided for by a female relation, married at eighteen a respectable clergyman, — and of his son, a young man of remarkable promise still at college, — he had contrived, by the time his brother returned from India, not only to mortgage nearly the whole of his estate, but to get into dispute or litigation with almost every gentleman for ten miles round.

The arrival of the governor afforded some ground of hope to the few remaining friends of the family. He was known to be a man of sense and probity, and by no means deficient in pride after his own fashion; and no one doubted but a reconciliation would take place, and a part of the nabob's rupees be applied to the restoration of the fallen glories of Lisle-End. With that object in view, a distant relation contrived to produce a seemingly accidental interview at his own house between the two brothers, who had had no sort of intercourse,

except an interchange of cold letters on their father's death, since the hour of their separation.

Never was mediation more completely unsuccessful. They met as cold and reluctant friends ; they parted as confirmed and bitter enemies. Both, of course, were to blame ; and equally of course, each laid the blame on the other. Perhaps the governor's intentions might be the kindest. Undoubtedly his manner was the worst : for, scolding, haranguing, and laying down the law, as he had been accustomed to do in the East, he at once offered to send his nephew to India with the certainty of accumulating an ample fortune, and to relieve his brother's estate from mortgage, and allow him a handsome income on the small condition of taking possession himself of the family mansion and the family property — a proposal coldly and stiffly refused by the elder brother, who, without deigning to notice the second proposition, declined his son's entering into the service of a commercial company, much in the spirit and almost in the words of Rob Roy, when the good Baillie Nicol Jarvie proposed to apprentice his hopeful offspring to the mechanical occupation of a weaver. The real misfortune of the interview was, that the parties were too much alike, both proud, both irritable, both obstinate, and both too much accustomed to deal with their inferiors.

The negotiation failed completely ; but the governor clinging to his native place with a mixed feeling, compounded of love for the spot and hatred to its proprietor, purchased at an exorbitant price an estate close at hand, built a villa, and laid out grounds with the usual magnificence of an Indian, bought every acre of land that came under sale for miles around, was shrewdly suspected of having secured some of Sir Everard's numerous mortgages, and proceeded to invest Lisle-End just as formally as the besieging army sat down before the citadel of Antwerp. He spared no pains to annoy his enemy ; defended all the actions brought by his brother, the lord of many manors, against trespassers and poachers ; disputed his motions at the vestry ; quarrelled with his decisions on the bench ; turned whig because Sir Everard was a tory ; and set the whole parish and half the county by the ears by his incessant squabbles.

Amongst the gentry, his splendid hospitality, his charming daughter, and the exceeding unpopularity of his adversary, who at one time or other had been at law with nearly all of

them, commanded many partisans. But the common people, frequently great sticklers for hereditary right, adhered for the most part to the cause of their landlord — ay, even those with whom he had been disputing all his life long. This might be partly ascribed to their universal love for the young squire Henry, whose influence among the poor fairly balanced that of Constance among the rich ; but the chief cause was certainly to be found in the character of the governor himself.

At first it seemed a fine thing to have obtained so powerful a champion in every little scrape. They found, however, and pretty quickly, that in gaining this new and magnificent protector they had also gained a master. Obedience was a necessary of life to our Indian, who, although he talked about liberty and equality, and so forth, and looked on them abstractedly as excellent things, had no very exact practical idea of their operation, and claimed in England the same absolute and unquestioned dominion which he had exercised in the East. Everything must bend to his sovereign will and pleasure, from the laws of cricket to the laws of the land ; so that the sturdy farmers were beginning to grumble, and his *protégés*, the poachers, to rebel, when the sudden death of Sir Everard put an immediate stop to his operations and his enmity.

For the new Sir Henry, a young man beloved by everybody, studious and thoughtful, but most amiably gentle and kind, his uncle had always entertained an involuntary respect — a respect due at once to his admirable conduct and his high-toned and interesting character. They knew each other by sight, but had never met until a few days after the funeral, when the governor repaired to Lisle-End in deep mourning, shook his nephew heartily by the hand, condoled with him on his loss, begged to know in what way he could be of service to him, and finally renewed the offer to send him out to India, with the same advantages that would have attended his own son, which he had previously made to Sir Everard. The young heir thanked him with that smile, rather tender than glad, which gave its sweet expression to his countenance, sighed deeply, and put into his hands a letter “which he had found,” he said, “amongst his poor father’s papers, and which must be taken for his answer to his uncle’s generous and too tempting offers.”

“You refuse me then ?” asked the governor.

"Read that letter, and tell me if I can do otherwise. Only read that letter," resumed Sir Henry; and his uncle, curbing with some difficulty his natural impatience, opened and read the paper.

It was a letter from a dying father to a beloved son, conjuring him by the duty he had ever shown to obey his last injunction, and neither to sell, let, alienate, nor leave Lisle-End; to preserve the estate entire and undiminished so long as the rent sufficed to pay the interest of the mortgages; and to live among his old tenantry in his own old halls so long as the ancient structure would yield him shelter. "Do this, my beloved son," pursued the letter, "and take your father's tenderest blessing; and believe that a higher blessing will follow on the sacrifice of interest, ambition, and worldly enterprise, to the will of a dying parent. You have obeyed my injunctions living — do not scorn them dead. Again and again I bless you, prime solace of a life of struggle — my dear, my dutiful son!"

"Could I disobey?" inquired Sir Henry, as his uncle returned him the letter; "could it even be a question?"

"No!" replied the governor peevishly. "But to mew you up with the deer and the pheasants in this wild old park, to immure a fine, spirited lad in this huge old mansion along with family pictures and suits of armour, and all for a whim, a crotchet, which can answer no purpose upon earth — it's enough to drive a man mad!"

"It will not be for long," returned Sir Henry, gently. "Short as it is, my race is almost run. And then, thanks to the unbroken entail — the entail which I never could prevail to have broken, when it might have spared *him* so much misery — the park, mansion, and estate, even the old armour and the family pictures, will pass into much better hands — into yours. And Lisle-End will once more flourish in splendour and hospitality."

The young baronet smiled as he said this; but the governor, looking on his tall, slender figure and pallid cheek, felt that it was likely to be true, and, wringing his hand in silence, was about to depart, when Sir Henry begged him to remain a moment longer.

"I have still one favour to beg of you, my dear uncle — one favour which I may beg. When last I saw Miss Lisle

at the house of my sister Mrs. Beauchamp (for I have twice accidentally had the happiness to meet her there), she expressed a wish that you had such a piece of water in your grounds as that at the east end of the park, which luckily adjoins your demesne. She would like, she said, a pleasure-vessel on that pretty lake. Now I may not sell, or let, or alienate — but surely I may lend. And if you will accept this key, and she will deign to use as her own the Lisle-End mere, I need not, I trust, say how sacred from all intrusion from me or mine the spot would prove, or how honoured I should feel myself if it could contribute, however slightly, to her pleasure. Will you tell her this?"

"You had better come and tell her yourself."

"No! Oh no!"

"Well, then, I suppose I must."

And the governor went slowly home whistling, not for "want of thought," but as a frequent custom of his when any thing vexed him.

About a month after this conversation, the father and daughter were walking through a narrow piece of woodland, which divided the highly ornamented gardens of the governor, with their miles of gravel-walks and acres of American borders, from the magnificent park of Lisle-End. The scene was beautiful, and the weather, a sunny day in early May, showed the landscape to an advantage belonging, perhaps, to no other season: on the one hand, the gorgeous shrubs, trees, and young plantations of the new place, the larch in its tenderest green, lilacs, laburnums, and horse-chestnuts, in their flowery glory, and the villa, with its irregular and oriental architecture, rising above all; on the other, the magnificent oaks and beeches of the park, now stretching into avenues, now clumped on its swelling lawns (for the ground was remarkable for its inequality of surface), now reflected in the clear water of the lake, into which the woods sometimes advanced in mimic promontories, receding again into tiny bays, by the side of which the dappled deer lay in herds beneath the old thorns; whilst, on an eminence, at a considerable distance, the mansion, an ancient and magnificent structure of great extent and regularity, stood silent and majestic as a pyramid in the desert. The spot through which they were passing had a character of extraordinary beauty, yet strikingly different

from either scene. It was a wild glen, through which an irregular footpath led to the small gate in the park, of which Sir Henry had sent Constance the key; the shelving banks on either side clothed with furze in the fullest blossom, which scented the air with its rich fragrance, and would almost have dazzled the eye with its golden lustre but for a few scattered firs and hollies, and some straggling clumps of the green and feathery birch. The nightingales were singing around, the wood-pigeons cooing overhead, and the father and daughter passed slowly and silently along, as if engrossed by the sweetness of the morning and the loveliness of the scene.

They were thinking of nothing less; as was proved by the first question of the governor, who, always impatient of any pause in conversation, demanded of his daughter "what answer he was to return to the offer of Lord Fitzallan."

"A courteous refusal, my dear father, if you please," answered Constance.

"But I do not please," replied her father, with his crossiest whistle. "Here you say No! and No! and No! to everybody, instead of marrying some one or other of these young men who flock round you, and giving me the comfort of seeing a family of grandchildren about me in my old age. No to this lord! and No to that! I verily believe, Constance, that you mean to die an old maid."

"I do not expect to live to be an old maid," sighed Constance; "but nothing is so unlikely as my marrying."

"Whew!" ejaculated the governor. "So she means to die, as well as her cousin! What has put that notion into your head, Constance? Are you ill?"

"Not particularly," replied the daughter. "But yet I am persuaded that my life will be a short one. And so, my dear father, as you told me the other day that now that I am of age I ought to make my will, I have just been following your advice."

"Oh! that accounts for your thinking of dying. Everybody after first making a will expects not to survive above a week or two. I did not myself, I remember, some forty years ago, when, having scraped a few hundreds together, I thought it a duty to leave them to somebody. But I got used to the operation as I became richer and older. Well, Constance! you have a pretty little fortune to bequeath—about three

hundred thousand pounds, as I take it. What have you done with your money? — not left it to me, I hope!”

“No, dear father; you desired me not.”

“That’s right. But whom have you made your heir? Your maid, Nannette? or your lap-dog, Fido? — they are your prime pets — or the County Hospital? or the Literary Fund? or the National Gallery? or the British Museum? — eh, Constance?”

“None of these, dear father. I have left my property where it will certainly be useful, and I think well used — to my cousin Henry of Lisle-End.”

“Her cousin Henry of Lisle-End!” re-echoed the father, smiling, and then sending forth a short loud whistle, eloquent of pleasure and astonishment. “So, so! Her cousin Henry!”

“But keep my secret, I conjure you, dear father!” pursued Constance, eagerly.

“Her cousin Henry!” said the governor to himself, sitting down on the side of the bank to calculate: “her cousin Henry! And she may be queen of Lisle End, as this key proves, queen of the lake, and the land, and the land’s master. And the three hundred thousand pounds will more than clear away the mortgages, and I can take care of her jointure and the younger children. I like your choice exceedingly, Constance,” continued her father, drawing her to him on the bank.

“Oh, my dear father, I beseech you keep my secret!”

“Yes, yes, we’ll keep the secret quite as long as it shall be necessary. Don’t blush so, my charmer, for you have no need. Let me see — there must be a six months’ mourning — but the preparations may be going on just the same. And, in spite of my foolish brother and his foolish will, my Constance will be lady of Lisle-End.”

And within six months the wedding did take place; and, if there could be a happier person than the young bridegroom or his lovely bride, it was the despotic but kind-hearted governor.

THE GREEK PLAYS.

AFTER speaking of the excellent air and healthy situation of Belford, as well as its central position with regard to Bath, Southampton, Brighton, and Oxford, and its convenient distance from the metropolis, the fact of its abounding in boarding-schools might almost be assumed ; since in a country town with these recommendations you are as sure to find a colony of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, as you are to meet with a rookery in a grove of oaks. It is the natural habitation of the species.

Accordingly all the principal streets in Belford, especially the different entrances to the town, were furnished with classical, commercial, and mathematical academies for young gentlemen, or polite seminaries for young ladies. Showy and spacious-looking mansions they were, for the most part, generally a little removed from the high road, and garnished with the captivating titles of Clarence House, Sussex House, York House, and Gloucester House ; it being, as every one knows, the approved fashion of the loyal fraternity of schoolmasters to call their respective residences after one or other of the Princes, dead or alive, of the royal House of Brunswick. Not a hundred yards could you walk without stumbling on some such rural academy ; and you could hardly proceed half a mile on any of the main roads without encountering a train of twenty or thirty pretty, prim misses, arranged in orderly couplets like steps in a ladder, beginning with the shortest, and followed by two or three demure and neatly-arrayed governesses ; or some more irregular procession of straggling boys, for whom the wide footpath was all too narrow, some loitering behind, some scampering before, some straying on one side, some on the other — dirty, merry, untidy, and unruly, as if Eton*, or Westminster, or the London University itself, had the honour of their education : nay, if you chanced to pass the

* Everybody remembers the poet Gray's description of the youthful members of the aristocracy, the future peers and incipient senators, at Eton : " dirty boys playing at cricket."

Lancasterian School, or the National School, towards four in the evening or twelve at noon, you might not only witness the turbulent outpouring of that most boisterous mob of small people, with a fair prospect of being yourself knocked down, or at best of upsetting some urchin in the rush (the chance of playing knocker or knockee being almost even); but might also, if curious in such matters, have an opportunity of deciding whether the Dissenters under Mr. Lancaster's system, or the Church of England children under Dr. Bell's, succeeded best in producing a given quantity of noise, and whether the din of shouting boys or the clamour of squalling girls, in the ecstatic uproariousness of their release from the school-room, be the more intolerable to ears of any delicacy.

Besides these comparatively modern establishments for education, Belford boasted two of those old picturesque foundations, a blue-coat school for boys, and a green-school for girls, — proofs of the charity and piety of our ancestors, who, on the abolition of monasteries, so frequently bestowed their posthumous bounty on endowments for the godly bringing up of poor children, and whose munificence, if less extended in the numbers taught, was so much more comprehensive and complete with regard to the selected objects; including not only bed and board, and lodging and clothing, during the period of instruction, but even apprentice fees for placing them out when they had been taught the simple and useful knowledge which their benefactors thought necessary. For my own part, zealous as I confess myself to be for the widest diffusion of education possible, I cannot help entertaining also a strong predilection for these limited and orderly charity-schools, where good principles and good conduct, and the value of character, both in the children and their teachers, form the first consideration. I certainly do not like them the less for the pleasant associations belonging to their picturesque old-fashioned dress — the long-waisted bodies and petticoat-like skirt of the bluecoat boys, their round tasselled caps, and monkish leathern girdles; or the little green stuff gowns of the girls, with their snow-white tippets, their bibs and aprons, and mobs. I know nothing prettier than to view on a Sunday morning the train of these primitive-looking little maidens (the children of “Mr. West's charity”) pacing demurely down the steps of their equally picturesque and old-fashioned

dwelling, on their way to church, the house itself a complete relique of the domestic architecture of Elizabeth's day, in excellent preservation, and the deep bay-windows adorned with geraniums (the only modern things about the place), which even my kind friend Mr. Foster need not be ashamed to own. I doubt if any body else in the county could surpass them.

But the school of schools in Belford, that which was pre-eminently called Belford School, of which the town was justly proud, and for which it was justly famous, was a foundation of a far higher class and character, but of nearly the same date with the endowments for boys and girls which I have just mentioned.

Belford School was one of those free grammar-schools which followed almost as a matter of course upon the Reformation, when education, hitherto left chiefly to the monks and monasteries, was taken out of their hands, and placed under the care of the secular clergy;—the master, necessarily in orders, and provided with testimonials and degrees, being chosen by the corporation, who had also the power of sending the sons of poor townsmen, for gratuitous instruction, and the privilege of electing off a certain number of boys to scholarships and fellowships at various colleges in Oxford. The master's salary was, as usual, small, and his house large, so that the real remuneration of the gentlemen who conduct these grammar-schools — one of which is to be found in almost every great town in England — where the greater part of our professional men and country gentry have been educated, and from whence so many eminent persons have been sent forth, depends almost wholly upon the boarders and day-scholars not on the foundation, whilst the number of boarders is of course contingent on the character and learning of the master.

And it was to the high character, the extensive learning, and the well-merited popularity of the late venerable master, that Belford School was indebted for being at one period next, perhaps, to Rugby, in point of numbers, and second to none in reputation.

The school was the first thing shown to strangers. Prints of the school hung up in every shop, and engravings and drawings of the same cherished spot might be met in many mansions far and near. East and west, north and south — in

London, in India, abroad and at home, were those pictures seen — frequently accompanied by a fine engraving of the master, whose virtues had endeared to his pupils those boyish recollections which, let poets talk as they will, are but too often recollections of needless privation, repulsed affection, and unrewarded toil.

Belford School was in itself a pretty object — at least I, who loved it almost as much as if I had been of the sex that learns Greek and Latin, thought it so. It was a spacious dwelling, standing in a nook of the pleasant green called the Forbury, and parted from the churchyard of St. Nicholas by a row of tall old houses, in two or three of which the under-masters lived, and, the doctor's mansion being overflowing, received boarders, for the purpose of attending the school. There was a little court before the door with four fir-trees, and at one end a projecting bay-window, belonging to a very long room, or rather gallery, lined with a noble collection of books, several thousand volumes, rich, not merely in classical lore, but in the best editions of the best authors in almost every language.

In the sort of recess formed by this window the dear Doctor (the Doctor *par excellence*) generally sat out of school-hours. There he held his levees, or his drawing-rooms (for ladies were by no means excluded) — finding time, as your very busy (or in other words, your very *active*) people so often do, to keep up with all the topics of the day, from the gravest politics (and the good Doctor was a keen politician) to the lightest pleasantry. In that long room, too, which would almost have accommodated a mayor's feast, his frequent and numerous dinner-parties were generally held. It was the only apartment in that temple of hospitality large enough to satisfy his own open heart; and the guests who had a general invitation to his table would almost have filled it.

His person had an importance and stateliness which answered to the popular notion of a schoolmaster, and certainly contributed to the influence of his manner over his pupils. So most undoubtedly did his fine countenance. It must have been a real punishment to have disturbed the serenity of those pale placid features, or the sweetness of that benevolent smile.

Benevolence was, after all, his prime characteristic. Full of knowledge, of wisdom, and of learning, an admirable

schoolmaster*, and exemplary in every relation of life, his singular kindness of heart was his most distinguishing quality. Nothing could ever warp his candour — that candour which is so often the wisest justice, — or stifle his charity ; and his pardon followed so immediately upon an offence, or an injury, that people begin to think that there was no great merit in such placability — that it was an affair of temperament, and that he forgave because he could not help forgiving — just as another man might have resented. His school was of course an unspeakable advantage to the town ; but of all the benefits which he daily conferred upon his neighbours, his friends, his pupils, and his family, by very far the greatest was his example.

If he were beloved by his pupils, his sweet and excellent wife was almost idolized. Lovelier in middle age than the lovely daughters (a wreath of living roses) by whom she was surrounded ; pure, simple, kind, and true, no human being ever gathered around her more sincere and devoted affection than the charming lady of Belford School. Next to his own dear mother, every boy loved her ; and her motherly feeling, her kindness, and her sympathy seemed inexhaustible ; she had care and love for all. There is a portrait of her too ; but it does not do her justice. The pictures that are really like her, are the small Madonnas of Raphael, of which there are two or three in the Stafford Gallery : they have her open forehead, her divine expression, her simple grace. Raphael was one of the few even of the old masters who knew how to paint such women ; who could unite such glowing beauty to such transparent purity !

Perhaps one of the times at which the doctor was seen to most advantage was on a Sunday afternoon in his own school-room, where, surrounded by his lovely wife, his large and promising family, his pupils and servants, and occasionally by a chosen circle of friends and guests, he was accustomed to perform the evening service, two of the elder boys reading the lessons, and he himself preaching, with an impressiveness which none that ever heard him can forget, those doctrines of peace and good-will, of holiness, and of charity, of which his whole life was an illustration.

It is, however, a scene of a different nature that I have un-

* “ He teacheth best who knoweth best.” — *Cary's Pindar*.

dertaken to chronicle ; and I must hasten to record, so far as an unlettered woman may achieve that presumptuous task, the triumphs of Sophocles and Euripides on the boards of Belford School.

The foundation was subject to a triennial visitation of the heads of some of the houses at Oxford, for the purpose of examining the pupils, and receiving those elected in scholarships in their respective colleges ; and the examination had been formerly accompanied, as is usual, by Greek and Latin recitations, prize-poems, speeches, &c. ; but about thirty years back it occurred to the good doctor, who had a strong love of the drama, knew Shakspeare nearly as well as he knew Homer, and would talk of the old actors, Garrick, Henderson*, Mrs. Yates, and Miss Farren, until you could fancy that you had seen them, that a Greek drama, well got up, would improve the boys both in the theory and practice of elocution, and in the familiar and critical knowledge of the language ; that it would fix their attention and stimulate their industry in a manner far beyond any common tasks or examinations ; that it would interest their parents and amuse their friends ; that the purity of the Greek tragedies rendered them (unlike the Latin comedies which time has sanctioned at Westminster) unexceptionable for such a purpose ; and that a classical exhibition of so high an order would be worthy of his own name in the world of letters, and of the high reputation of his establishment.

Hence arose the Greek plays of Belford School.

Everything conduced to the success of the experiment. It so happened that the old school-room — not then used for its original destination, as the doctor had built a spacious apartment for that purpose, closer to his own library — was the very place that a manager would have desired for a theatre ; being a very long and large room, communicating at one end with the school-house, and opening at the other into the entrance to the Town-hall, under which it was built. The end

* Henderson was his favourite. So, from MS. letters in my possession, I find him to have been, with Captain Jephson, the author of the "Count De Narbonne," the "Italian Lover," &c. and the friend both of Garrick and of John Kemble. Intellect seems to have been his remarkable characteristic, and that quality which results from intellect, but does not always belong to it — taste. What an artist must that man have been who played Hamlet and Falstaff on following nights, beating his young competitor Kemble in the one part, and his celebrated predecessor Quin in the other ! His early death was perhaps the greatest loss that the stage ever sustained.

next the house, excellently fitted up with scenery and properties, and all the modern accessories of the drama, formed the stage, whilst the rest of the room held the audience; and a prettier stage, whether for public or private theatricals, hath seldom been seen. It was just the right size, just a proper frame for the fine tragic pictures it so often exhibited. If it had been larger, the illusion which gave the appearance of men and women to the young performers would have been destroyed, and the effect of the grouping much diminished by the comparative unimportance which space and vacancy give to the figures on the scene. That stage would be the very thing for the fashionable amusement of tableaux; but even then they would want the presiding genius of our great master, who, although he pretended to no skill in the art, must have had a painter's eye, for never did I see such grouping, aided as it was by the utmost splendour and accuracy in the classical costumes. "Oh for an historical painter!" was Mr. Bowles the poet's exclamation, both at the death and the unveiling of Alcestis; and I never saw any one of the performances in which a young artist would not have found a series of models for composition and expression.

Besides the excellence of the theatre, the audience, another main point in the drama, was crowded, intelligent, and enthusiastic. The visitors from Oxford, and the mayor and corporation of Belford, (in their furred gowns, — poor dear aldermen, I wondered they survived the heat! — but I suppose they did, for I never remember to have heard of any coroner's inquest at Belford, of which the verdict was "Died of the Greek plays,") these, the grandees of the University and the Borough, attended *ex-officio*; the parents and friends of the performers were drawn there by the pleasanter feelings of affection and pride, and the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood crowded to the theatre for a double reason — they liked it, and it was the fashion.

Another most delighted part of the audience consisted of the former pupils of the school, the doctor's old scholars, who had formed themselves into a sort of club, meeting in the winter in London, and in the autumn at one of the principal inns at Belford, whither they thronged from all parts of England, and where, especially at the time of the triennial plays, they often stayed days and weeks, to assist at the rehearsals

and partake of the social gaiety of that merry time. For weeks before the plays, the doctor's ever-hospitable house was crowded with visitors ; his sons stealing a short absence from their several professions, with sometimes a blushing bride (for, in imitation of their father, they married early and happily) ; fair young friends of his fair daughters ; distinguished foreigners ; celebrated scholars ; nephews, nieces, cousins, and friends, without count or end. It was one scene of bustle and gaiety ; the gentle mistress smiling through it all, and seeming as if she had nothing to do but to make her innumerable guests as happy and as cheerful as she was herself. No one that entered the house could doubt her sincerity of welcome. However crowded the apartments might be, the gentle hostess had heart-room for all.

A pleasant scene it was for weeks before the play, since of all pleasures, especially of theatrical pleasures, the preparation is the most delightful ; and in these preparations there was a more than common portion of amusing contrast and diverting difficulties. Perhaps the training of the female characters was the most fertile in fun. Fancy a quick and lively boy learning to tread mincingly, and carry himself demurely, and move gently, and curtsey modestly, and speak softly, and blush, and cast down his eyes, and look as like a girl as if he had all his life worn petticoats. Fancy the vain attempt, by cold cream and chicken-skin gloves to remove the stain of the summer's sun, and bring the coarse red paws into a semblance of feminine delicacy ! Fancy the rebellion of the lad, and his hatred of stays, and his horror of paint, and the thousand droll incidents that, partly from accident and partly from design, were sure to happen at each rehearsal, (the rehearsal of an English tragedy at a real theatre is comical enough, Heaven knows !) and it will not be astonishing that, in spite of the labour required by the study of so many long speeches, the performers as well as the guests behind the scenes were delighted with the getting-up of the Greek plays.

And in spite of their difficulties with the feminine costume, never did I see female characters more finely represented than by these boys. The lads of Shakspeare's days who played his Imogenes, and Constances, and Mirandas, could not have exceeded the Alcestises, and Electras, and Jocastas of Belford

School. And the male characters were almost equally perfect. The masterpieces of the Greek stage were performed not only with a critical accuracy in the delivery of the text, but with an animation and fervour which marked all the shades of feeling, as if the young actors had been accustomed to think and to feel in Greek. The effect produced upon the audience was commensurate with the excellence of the performance. The principal scenes were felt as truly as if they had been given in English by some of our best actors. Even the most unlettered lady was sensible to that antique grace and pathos, and understood a beauty in the words, though not the words.

Another attraction of these classical performances was the English prologue and epilogue by which they were preceded and followed. These were always written by old pupils of the school, and I cannot resist the temptation of transcribing one from the pen of the most distinguished person whom that school has ever produced. Need I add the name of my friend, Mr. Serjeant Talfourd?

PROLOGUE TO THE HECUBA OF EURIPIDES.

SPOKEN OCT. 1827.

“ Kind friends, with genial plaudits may we close
Our feeble miniature of mighty woes?
Or think you that we aim to strike, too late,
With crimes antique, and passions out of date
No : altered but in form life's stage they fill,
And all our characters are extant still.

“ First, Hecuba : — nay, there my scheme's too bold,
I grant — no lady in these times grows old ;
But not in vain you'll seek the ancient rage
In some starch vixen of ‘ *a certain age*.’
Thus if you chance, though fair in her regards,
At whist her partner, to forget the cards,
Stop scandal's torrent with a word of peace,
Offend her cat, or compliment her niece ;
Beneath her rouge when deeper colours rise,
Remember Hecuba — and mind your eyes.

“ Still would the mild Ulysses win the town,
His armour barter'd for a Counsel's gown :
Severest truths, he never practised, teach,
And be profuse of wealth and life — in speech.
Or on the hustings gain th' inspiring cheer ; —
But hold ! we own no politicians here.
The radiant colours Iris wreathes in heaven,
May but be foes at most one year in seven,
And mingling brighter from the generous strife]
Shed rainbow hues on passion-wearied life.

- “ What ! if the Thracian’s guilt we rarely see —
Thousands for gain were lately mad as he ;
When Trade held strange alliance with Romance,
And Fancy lent delusive shades to Chance —
Bade golden visions hover o’er the Strand,
And made ’Change-alley an enchanted land.
There the rapt merchant dreamt of Sinbad’s vale,
And catalogued in thought its gems for sale ;
There dived to Vigo’s time-unalter’d caves
And ransom’d millions from the courteous waves.
Still might some daring band their arts employ,
To search for Priam’s treasures hid in Troy —
For gold, which Polymnestor did *not find*,
But only missed, because the rogue was blind.
Or, since our classic robbers dote on Greece,
Set paper-sails to win her Golden Fleece ;
And bid her hopes, revived by civic pity,
Flash in a loan to fade in a committee.
- “ Nor need we here Imagination’s aid
To own the virtue of the Trojan maid.
Would any ask where courage meek as hers
Truth’s saddest tests to garish joy prefers,
Where Love earth’s fragile clay to heaven allies,
And life prolong’d is one sweet sacrifice —
Where gentlest wisdom waits to cheer and guide ye ; —
Husbands and lovers, only look beside ye !
- “ And if our actors gave but feeble hints
Of the old Bard’s imperishable tints,
Yet, if with them some classic grace abide,
And bid no British thought or throb subside,
Right well we know your fondest wish you gain,
We have not toiled, nor you approved in vain.”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

PETER JENKINS, THE POULTERER.

As I prophesied in the beginning of this book, so it fell out: Mr. Stephen Lane became parish-officer of Sunham. I did not, however, foresee that the matter would be so easily and so speedily settled; neither did he. Mr. Jacob Jones, the ex-ruler of that respectable hamlet, was a cleverer person than we took him for; and, instead of staying to be beaten, sagely preferred to "evacuate Flanders," and leave the enemy in undisputed possession of the field of battle. He did not even make his appearance at the vestry, nor did any of his partisans. Stephen had it all his own way; was appointed overseer, and found himself, to his great astonishment, carrying all his points, sweeping away, cutting down, turning out, retrenching, and reforming so as never reformer did before; — for in the good town of Belford, although eventually triumphant, and pretty generally successful in most of his operations, he had been accustomed to play the part, not of a minister who originates, but of a leader of opposition who demolishes measures; in short, he had been a sort of check, a balance-wheel in the borough machinery, and never dreamt of being turned into a main-spring; so that, when called upon to propose his own plans his success disconcerted him not a little. It was so unexpected, and he himself so unprepared for a catastrophe which took from him his own dear fault-finding ground, and placed him in the situation of a reviewer, who should be required to write a better book than the one under dissection, in the place of cutting it up.

Our good butcher was fairly posed, and, what was worse, his adversary knew it. Mr. Jacob Jones felt his advantage, returned with all his forces (consisting of three individuals, like "a three-tailed bashaw") to the field which he had abandoned, and commenced a series of skirmishing guerilla

warfare — affairs of posts as it were — which went near to make his ponderous, and hitherto victorious enemy, in spite of the weight of his artillery and the number and discipline of his troops, withdraw in his turn from the position which he found it so painful and so difficult to maintain. Mr. Jacob Jones was a great man at a quibble. He could not knock down like Stephen Lane, but he had a real talent for that sort of pulling to pieces which, to judge from the manner in which all children, before they are taught better, exercise their little mischievous fingers upon flowers, would seem to be instinctive in human nature. Never did a spoilt urchin of three years old demolish a carnation more completely than Mr. Jacob Jones picked to bits Mr. Lane's several propositions. On the broad question, the principle of the thing proposed, our good ex-butcher was pretty sure to be victorious ; but in the detail, the clauses of the different measures, Mr. Jacob Jones, who had a wonderful turn for perplexing and puzzling whatever question he took in hand, a real genius for confusion, generally contrived (for the gentleman was a "word-catcher who lived on syllables") by expunging half a sentence in one place, and smuggling in two or three words in another — by alterations that were any thing but amendments, and amendments that upset all that had gone before, to produce such a mass of contradictions and nonsense, that the most intricate piece of special pleading that ever went before the Lord Chancellor, or the most addle-headed bill that ever passed through a Committee of the whole House, would have been common sense and plain English in the comparison. The man had eminent qualities for a debater too, especially a debater of that order, — incorrigible pertness, intolerable pertinacy, and a noble contempt of right and wrong. Even in that matter which is most completely open to proof, a question of figures, he was wholly inaccessible to conviction ; show him the fact fifty times over, and still he returned to the charge, — still was his shrill squeaking treble heard above and between the deep sonorous bass of Stephen, — still did his small narrow person whisk and flitter around the "huge rotundity" of that ponderous and excellent parish-officer, buzzing and stinging like some active hornet or slim dragon-fly about the head of one of his own oxen. There was no putting down Jacob Jones.

Our good butcher fretted and fumed, and lifted his hat from his head, and smoothed down his shining hair, and wiped his honest face, and stormed, and thundered, and vowed vengeance against Jacob Jones ; and finally threatened not only to secede with his whole party from the vestry, but to return to the Butts, and leave the management of Sunham, workhouse, poor-rates, highways, and all, to his nimble competitor. One of his most trusty adherents indeed, a certain wealthy yeoman of the name of Alsop, well acquainted with his character, suggested that a very little flattery on the part of Mr. Lane, or a few well-directed bribes, would not fail to dulcify and even to silence the worthy in question ; but Stephen had never flattered anybody in his life—it is very doubtful if he knew how ; and held bribery of any sort in a real honest abhorrence, very unusual for one who had had so much to do with contested elections ;—and to bribe and flatter Jacob Jones ! Jacob, whom the honest butcher came nearer to hating than ever he had to hating anybody ! His very soul revolted against it. So he appointed Farmer Alsop, who understood the management of “the chap,” as he was wont to call his small opponent, deputy overseer, and betook himself to his private concerns, in the conduct of his own grazing farm, in overseeing the great shop in the Butts, in attending his old clubs, and mingling with his old associates in Belford ; and, above all, in sitting in his sunny summer-house during the sultry evenings of July and August, enveloped in the fumes of his own pipe and clouds of dust from the high-road ; which was his manner of enjoying the pleasures of the country.

Towards autumn, a new and a different interest presented itself to the mind of Stephen Lane, in the shape of the troubles of one of his most intimate friends and most faithful and loyal adherents in the loyal borough of Belford Regis.

Peter Jenkins, the poulterer, his next-door neighbour in the Butts, formed exactly that sort of contrast in mind and body to the gigantic and energetic butcher which we so often find amongst persons strongly attached to each other. Each was equally good and kind, and honest and true ; but strength was the distinguishing characteristic of the one man, and weakness of the other. Peter, much younger than his friend and neighbour, was pale and fair, and slender and delicate, with straight flaxen hair, very light eyes, a shy timid manner, a small voice,

and a general helplessness of aspect. "Poor fellow!" was the internal exclamation, the unspoken thought of everybody that conversed with him; there was something so pitiful in his look and accent: and yet Peter was one of the richest men in Belford, having inherited the hoards of three or four miserly uncles, and succeeded to the well-accustomed poultry-shop in the Butts, a high narrow tenement, literally stuffed with geese, ducks, chickens, pigeons, rabbits, and game of all sorts, which lined the doors and windows, and dangled from the ceiling, and lay ranged upon the counter in every possible state, dead or alive, plucked or unplucked, crowding the dark old-fashioned shop, and forming the strongest possible contrast to the wide ample repository next door, spacious as a market, where Stephen's calves, and sheep, and oxen, in their several forms of veal, and beef, and mutton, hung in whole carcasses from the walls, or adorned in separate joints the open windows, or filled huge trays, or lay scattered on mighty blocks, or swung in enormous scales strong enough to have weighed Stephen Lane himself in the balance. Even that stupendous flesh bazaar did not give greater or truer assurance of affluence than the high, narrow, crowded menagerie of dead fowl next door.

Yet still was Peter justly called "Poor fellow!" In the first place, because he was, for a man, far over-gentle, much too like the inhabitants of his own feathery den—was not only "pigeon-livered and lacked gall," but was actually chicken-hearted; in the next, because he was very literally chicken-pecked, and, although a stranger to the comforts of matrimony, was comfortably under petticoat government, being completely domineered over by a maiden sister.

Miss Judith Jenkins was a single woman of middle age, lean, skinny, red-haired, exceedingly prim and upright, slow and formal in her manner, and, to all but Peter, remarkably smooth-spoken. To him her accent was invariably sharp, and sour, and peevish, and contradictory. She lectured him when at home, and rated him for going abroad. The very way in which she called him, though the poor man flew to obey her summons, the method after which she pronounced the innocent dissyllable "Peter," was a sort of taking to task. Having been his elder sister (although nothing now was less palatable to her than any allusion to her right of primogeniture), and his mother having died whilst he was an infant, she had been

accustomed to exercise over him, from the time that he was in leading strings, all the privileges of a nurse and gouvernante, and still called him to account for his savings and spendings, his comings and goings, much as she used to do when he was an urchin in short coats. Poor Peter never dreamt of rebellion; he listened and he endured; and every year as it passed over their heads seemed to increase her power and his submission. The uncivil world, always too apt to attribute any faults of temper in an old maid to the mere fact of her old-maidism (whereas there really are some single women who are not more ill-humoured than their married neighbours), used to attribute this acidity towards poor Peter, of which, under all her guarded upper manner, they caught occasional glimpses, to her maiden condition. I, for my part, believe in the converse proposition. I hold that which seemed to them the effect of her single state to have been, in reality, its main cause. And nobody who had happened to observe the change in Miss Judith Jenkins' face, at no time over-beautiful, when, from the silent, modest, curtseying, shop-woman-like civility with which she had been receiving an order for a fine turkey poult, a sort of "butter won't melt in her mouth" expression was turned at once into a "cheese won't choke her" look and voice as she delivered the order to her unlucky brother, could be much astonished that any of the race of bachelors should shrink from the danger of encountering such a look in his own person. Add to this that the damsel had no wordly goods and chattels, except what she might have saved in Peter's house, and, to do her justice, she was, I believe, a strictly honest woman; that the red hair was accompanied by red eyebrows and eyelashes, and eyes that, especially when talking to Peter, almost seemed red too; that her face was usually freckled; and that, from her exceeding meagreness, her very fairness (if mere whiteness may be called such) told against her by giving the look of bones starting through the skin; and it will be admitted that there was no immediate chance of the unfortunate poulterer's getting rid, by the pleasant and safe means called matrimony, of an encumbrance under which he groaned and bent, like Sinbad the Sailor when bestridden by that he-tormentor the Old Man of the Sea.

Thus circumstanced, Peter's only refuge and consolation

was in the friendship and protection of his powerful neighbour, before whose strength and firmness of manner and character (to say nothing of his bodily prowess, which, although it can never be exerted against them, does yet insensibly influence all women) the prim maiden quailed amain. With Stephen to back him, Peter dared attend public meetings and private clubs ; and, when sorely put to it by Judith's lectures, would slip through the back way into Mrs. Lane's parlour, basking in the repose of her gentleness, or excited by her good husband's merriment, until all the evils of his home were fairly forgotten. Of course, the kind butcher and his sweet wife loved the kind and harmless creature whom they, and they alone, had the power of raising into comfort and happiness ; and he repaid their affection by the most true and faithful devotion to Stephen in all affairs, whether election contests or squabbles of the corporation or the vestry. Never had leader of a party a more devoted adherent ; and abating his one fault of weakness, a fault which brought its own punishment, he was a partisan who would have done honour to any cause,—honest, open, true, and generous,—and one who would have been thoroughly hospitable, if his sister would but have let him.

As it was, he was a good fellow when she was out of the way, and had, like the renowned Jerry Sneak, his own moments of half-afraid enjoyment, on club nights, and at Christmas parties ; when, like the illustrious pinmaker, he sang his song and told his story with the best of them, and laughed, and rubbed his hands, and cracked his joke, and would have been quite happy, but for the clinging thought of his reception at home, where sat his awful sister, for she would sit up for him,

“ Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.”

However, Stephen generally saw him in, and broke the first fury of the tempest, and sometimes laughed it off altogether. With Stephen to back him, he was not so much afraid. He even, when unusually elevated with punch, his favourite liquor, would declare that he did not mind her at all ; what harm could a woman's scolding do ? And though his courage would ooze out somewhat as he approached his own door, and ascended the three steep steps, and listened to her sharp angry tread in the passage (for her very footsteps were to Peter's practised ear the precursors of the coming lecture) ; yet, on the

whole, whilst shielded by his champion and protector, the jolly butcher, he got on pretty well, and was perhaps as happy as a man linked to a domineering woman can well expect to be.

Mr. Lane's removal was a terrible stroke to Peter. The distance, it was true, was only half a mile; but the every-day friend, the next-door neighbour, was gone; and the poor poulterer fretted and pined, and gave up his club and his parish meetings, grew thinner and thinner, and paler and paler, and seemed dwindling away into nothing. He avoided his old friend during his frequent visits to the Butts, and even refused Mrs. Lane's kind and pressing invitations to come and see them at Sunham. His sister's absence or presence had ceased to make any difference in him; his spirits were altogether gone, and his very heart seemed breaking.

Affairs were in this posture, when, one fine afternoon in the beginning of October, Stephen was returning across Sunham Common from a walk that he had been taking over some of his pastures, which lay at a little distance from his house. He was quite unaccompanied, unless, indeed, his pet dog, Smoker, might be termed his companion — an animal of high blood and great sagacity, but so disguised by his insupportable fatness, that I myself, who have generally a tolerable eye when a greyhound is in question, took him for some new-fangled quadruped from foreign parts — some monstrous mastiff from the Anthropophagi, or Brobdignaggian pointer. Smoker and his master were marching leisurely up Sunham Common, under the shade of a noble avenue of oaks, terminating at one end by a spacious open grove of the same majestic tree; the sun at one side of them just sinking beneath the horizon, not making his usual "golden set," but presenting to the eye a ball of ruddy light; whilst the vapoury clouds on the east were suffused with a soft and delicate blush, like the reflection of roses on an alabaster vase; the bolls of the trees stood out in an almost brassy brightness, and large portions of the foliage of the lower branches were bathed, as it were, in gold, whilst the upper boughs retained the rich russet brown of the season; the green turf beneath was pleasant to the eye and to the tread, fragrant with thyme and aromatic herbs, and dotted here and there with the many-coloured fungi of autumn; the rooks were returning to their old abode in the oak-tops;

children of all ages were gathering acorns underneath ; and the light smoke was curling from the picturesque cottages, with their islets of gardens, which, intermingled with straggling horses, cows, and sheep, and intersected by irregular pools of water, dotted the surface of the village green.

It was a scene in which a poet or a painter would have delighted. Our good friend Stephen was neither. He paced along, supported himself on a tall stout hoe, called a paddle, which, since he had turned farmer, he had assumed instead of his usual walking-stick, for the purpose of eradicating docks and thistles,—now beheading a weed—now giving a jerk amongst a drift of fallen leaves, and sending them dancing on the calm autumnal air ; now catching on the end of his paddle an acorn as it fell from the tree, and sending it back amongst the branches like a shuttlecock ; now giving a rough but hearty caress to his faithful attendant Smoker, as the affectionate creature poked his long nose into his hand ; now whistling the beginning of one tune, now humming the end of another, whilst a train of thoughts, pleasant and unpleasant, merry and sad, went whirling along his brain. Who can describe or remember the visions of half an hour, the recollections of half a mile ? First, Stephen began gravely to calculate the profits of those upland pastures, called and known by the name of the Sunham Crofts ; the number of tons of hay contained in the ricks, the value of the grazing, and the deductions to be made for labour, manure, tithe, and poor-rate,—the land-tax, thought Stephen to himself, being redeemed ;—then poor little Dinah Keep crossed his path, and dropped her modest curtsey, and brought to mind her bedridden father, and his night-mare, Jacob Jones, who had refused to make this poor cripple the proper allowance ; and Stephen cursed Jacob in his heart, and resolved to send Dinah a bit of mutton that very evening ;—then Smoker went beating about in a patch of furze by the side of the avenue, and Stephen diverged from his path to help him, in hopes of a hare ;—then, when that hope was fairly gone, and Stephen and Smoker had resumed their usual grave and steady pace, a sow, browsing among the acorns with her young family, caught his notice and Smoker's, who had like to have had an affair with her in defence of one of the little pigs, whilst his master stopped to guess her weight. “ Full fourteen score,” thought Stephen,

“as she stands ; what would it be if fatted ? — twenty, at least. A wonderful fine animal ! I should like one of the breed.” Then he recollected how fond Peter Jenkins used to be of roast pig ; — then he wondered what was the matter with poor Peter ; — and just at that point of his cogitations he heard a faint voice cry, “ Stephen ! ” — and turning round to ascertain to whom the voice belonged, found himself in front of Peter himself, looking more shadowy than ever in the deepening twilight.

Greetings, kind and hearty, passed between the sometime neighbours, and Smoker was by no means behindhand in expressing his pleasure at the sight of an old friend. They sat down on a bank of turf, and moss, and thyme, formed by a water-channel, which had been cut to drain the avenue in winter : and the poor poulterer poured his griefs into the sympathising ear of his indignant friend.

“ And now she’s worse than ever,” quoth Peter ; “ I think soon that she’ll want the key of the till. She won’t let me go the club, or the vestry, or the mayor’s dinner : and the Tories have got hold of her, and if there should happen to be an election, she won’t let me vote.”

“ Marry, and be rid of her, man ! — that’s my advice,” shouted Stephen. “ Dang it ! if I’d be managed by any woman that ever was born. Marry, and turn her out of doors ! ” vociferated Stephen Lane, striking his paddle into the bank with such vehemence that that useful implement broke in the effort to pull it out again. “ Marry, I say ! ” shouted Stephen.

“ How can I ? ” rejoined the meek man of chickens ; “ she won’t let me.”

“ Won’t let him ! ” ejaculated the ex-butcher, with something like contempt. “ Won’t let him ! Afore I’d let any woman dare to hinder me — Howsomever, men are not all alike. Some are as vicious as a herd of wild bulls, and some as quiet as a flock of sheep. Every man to his nature. Is there any lass whom you could fancy, Peter ; provided a body could manage this virago of a sister of yours ? Does any pretty damsel run in your head ? ”

“ Why, I can’t but say,” replied Peter (and, doubtless, if there had been light enough to see him, Peter, whilst saying it, blushed like a young girl), “ I can’t but confess,” said the

man of the dove-cot, "that there is a little maiden —— Did you ever see Sally Clements?"

"What!" rejoined the hero of the cleaver, "Sally Clements! Did I ever see her! Sally Clements — the dear little girl that, when her father first broke, and then died broken-hearted, refused to go and live in ease and plenty in Sir John's family here (and I always respected my lady for making her the offer) as nursery governess, because she would not leave her sick grandmother, and who has stayed with her ever since, waiting on the poor old woman, and rearing poultry" ——

"She's the best fattener of turkeys in the country," interrupted Peter.

"Rearing poultry," proceeded Stephen, "and looking after the garden by day, and sitting up half the night at needle-work! Sally Clements — the prettiest girl within ten miles, and the best! Sally Clements — whom my mistress (and she's no bad judge of a young woman) loves as if she was her own daughter. Sally Clements! dang it, man! you shall have her. But does Sally like you?"

"I don't think she dislikes me," answered Peter modestly. "We've had a deal of talk when I have been cheapening her poultry, — buying, I should say; for, God knows, even if I had not liked her as I do, I never could have had the heart to bate her down. And I'm a great favourite with her good grandmother; and you know what a pleasure it would be to take care of her, poor old lady! as long as she lives, and how comfortably we could all live together in the Butts. —— Only Judith" ——

"Hang Judith! — you shall have the girl, man!" again ejaculated Stephen, thumping the broken paddle against the ground — "you shall have her, I say!"

"But think of Judith! And then, since Jacob Jones has got hold of her" ——

"Jacob Jones!" exclaimed Stephen, in breathless astonishment.

"Yes. Did not I tell you that she was converted to the Tories? Jacob Jones has got hold of her; and he and she both say that I'm in a consumption, and want me to quarrel with you, and to make my will, and leave all to her, and make him executor; and then I do believe they would worry me out

of my life, and marry before I was cold in my coffin, and dance over my grave," sighed poor Peter.

"Jacob Jones!" muttered Stephen to himself, in soliloquy; "Jacob Jones!" And then, after ten minutes' hard musing, during which he pulled off his hat, and wiped his face, and smoothed down his shining hair, and broke the remains of his huge paddle to pieces, as if it had been a willow twig, he rubbed his hands with a mighty chuckle, and cried, with the voice of a Stentor, "Dang it, I have it!"

"Harkee, man!" continued he, addressing Peter, who had sat pensively on one side of his friend, whilst Smoker reposed on the other — "Harkee, man! you shall quarrel with me, and you shall make your will. Send Lawyer Davis to me to-night; for we must see that it shall be only a will, and not a conveyance or a deed of gift; and you shall also take to your bed. Send Thomson, the apothecary, along with Davis: they're good fellows both, and will rejoice in humbugging Miss Judith. And then you shall insist on Jacob's marrying Judith, and shall give her five hundred pounds down, — that's a fair fortune, as times go; I don't want to cheat the woman; besides, it's worth any thing to be quit of her; and then they shall marry. Marriages are made in heaven, as my mistress says; and if that couple don't torment each other's heart out, my name's not Stephen. And when they are fairly gone off on their bridal excursion, — to Windsor, may be; ay, Mistress Judith used to want to see the Castle, — off with them to Windsor from the Church-door; — and then for another will, and another wedding — hey, Peter! — and a handsome marriage-settlement upon little Sally. We'll get her and her grandmother to my house to-morrow, and my wife will see to the finery. Off with you, man! Don't stand there, between laughing and crying; but get home, and set about it. And mind you don't forget to send Thomson and Lawyer Davis to me this very evening."

And home went Stephen, chuckling; and, as he said, it was done, — ay, within a fortnight from that very day; and the two couples were severally as happy and as unhappy as their respective qualities could make them — Mr. and Mrs. Jones finding so much employment in plaguing each other, that the good poulterer and his pretty wife, and Stephen, and the hamlet of Sunham, were rid of them altogether.

THE SAILOR'S WEDDING.

BESIDES Mrs. Martin, her maid Peggy, and her cat, there was one inmate of the little toy-shop in the market-place, who immediately attracted Mr. Singleton's attention, and not only won, but secured, the warm and constant affection of the kind-hearted bachelor. It was a chubby, noisy, sturdy, rude, riotous elf, of some three years old, still petticoated, but so self-willed, and bold, and masterful, so strong and so conscious of his strength, so obstinate and resolute, and, above all, so utterly contemptuous of female objurgation, and rebellious to female rule (an evil propensity that seems born with the *unfair* sex), that it was by no means necessary to hear his Christian name of Tom, to feel assured that the urchin in question belonged to the masculine half of the species. Nevertheless, daring, wilful, and unruly as it was, the brat was loveable, being, to say the truth, one of the merriest, drollest, best-natured, most generous, and most affectionate creatures that ever bounded about this work-a-day world; and Mr. Singleton, who, in common with many placid quiet persons, liked nothing so well as the reckless lightheartedness which supplied the needful impetus to his own tranquil spirit, took to the boy the very first evening, and became, from that hour, his most indulgent patron and protector, his champion in every scrape, and refuge in every calamity. There was no love lost between them. Tom, who would have resisted Mrs. Martin or Peggy to the death — who, the more they called him the more he would not come, and the more they bade him not do a thing, the more he did it — who, when cautioned against wetting his feet, jumped up to his neck in the watertub, and when desired to keep himself clean, solaced himself and the tabby cat with a game at romps in the coal-hole — who, in short, whilst under female dominion, played every prank of which an unruly boy is capable, was amenable to the slightest word or look from Mr. Singleton, came at his call, went away at his desire; desisted at his command from riding the unfortunate wooden steed, who, to say nothing of two or three dangerous falls, equally perilous to the horse and his rider, ran great risk of being worn out by Master

Tom's passion for equestrian exercise ; and even under his orders abandoned his favourite exercise of parading before the door beating a toy-drum, or blowing a penny-trumpet, and producing from those noisy implements a din more insupportable than ever such instruments have been found capable of making, before or since.

Mr. Singleton did more : not content with the negative benefit of restraining Master Tom's inclination for idleness, he undertook and accomplished the positive achievement of commencing his education. Under his auspices, at the cost of many cakes and much gingerbread, and with the great bribe of being able to read for himself the stories of fairies and giants, of Tom Thumb, and Blue Beard, and Cinderella, and Sinbad the Sailor, which he was now fain to coax his aunt and her maid Peggy into telling him, did Tom conquer the mysteries of the alphabet and spelling-book, in spite of the predictions of the dame of a neighbouring day-school, who had had the poor boy at her academy, as she was pleased to call it, for half a year, during which time she and her birch put together had never been able to teach him the difference between A and B, and who now, in that common spirit of prophecy in which "the wish is father to the thought," boldly foretold that all the Mr. Singletons in England would never make a scholar of Tom Lyndham ; she, for her part, had no notion of a child, who not only stole her spectacles, but did not mind being whipt for it when he had done. She wished no ill to the boy, but he would come to no good. All the world would see that.

Strange as it may seem, this effusion of petty malice had its effect in stimulating the efforts of our good curate. The spirit of contradiction, that very active principle of our common nature, had its existence even in him ; but, as bees can extract wax and honey from poisonous plants, so in his kind and benevolent temper it showed itself only in an extraordinary activity in well-doing. "Tom Lyndham shall be a scholar," thought and said Mr. Singleton ; and as his definition of the word was something different from that of the peevish old sibyl, whose notion of scholarship reached no farther than the power of reading or rather chanting, without let or pause, a chapter of crabbed names in the Old Testament, with such a comprehension of the sense as it pleased Heaven, and such a

pronunciation as would have made an Hebraist stare, he not only applied himself earnestly to the task of laying the foundation of a classical education, by teaching the boy writing, ciphering, and the rudiments of the Latin grammar, but exerted all his influence to get him admitted, at as early an age as the rules would permit, to the endowed grammar-school of the town.

The master of the school, a man who united, as we have before said, great learning to a singular generosity of character and sweetness of temper, received with more than common kindness the fine open-countenanced boy whom Mr. Singleton recommended so strongly to his notice and protection. But after he had been with him about the same time that he had passed with the dame of the day-school, he, in answer to his patron's anxious inquiries, made a prophecy nearly resembling hers, — to wit, that Tom Lyndham, spirited, intelligent, and clever as he undoubtedly was, seemed to him the most unlikely boy of his form to become an eminent scholar.

And as time wore away, this persuasion only became the more rooted in the good Doctor's mind. "He may, to be sure, take to Greek, as you say, Mr. Singleton, and go off to Oxford on the archbishop's foundation; things that seem as impossible do sometimes happen: nevertheless, to judge from probabilities, and from the result of a pretty long experience, I should say that to expect from Tom Lyndham any thing beyond the learning that will bear him creditably through the school and the world, is to demand a change of temper and of habit not far from miraculous. I don't say what the charms of the Greek grammar may effect; but, in my mind, the boy who is foremost in every sport, and first in every exercise; who swims, and rows, and dances, and fences better than any lad of his inches in the county; and who, in defence of a weaker child, or to right some manifest wrong, will box, ay, and beat into the bargain, a youth half as big again as himself; and who moreover is the liveliest, merriest, pleasantest little fellow that ever came under my observation — is far fitter for the camp than the college. Send him into the world, that's the place for him. Put him into the army, and I'll answer for his success. For my own part, I should not wonder to find him enlisting some day; neither should I care; for if he went out a drummer, he'd come back a general; nothing can

keep down Tom Lyndham :” and with this prognostic, at once pleasant and puzzling (for poor Mr. Singleton had not an acquaintance in the army, except the successive recruiting-officers who had at various times carried off the heroes of Belford), the worthy doctor marched away.

Fortune, however, who seems to find amusement in sometimes disappointing the predictions of the wise, and sometimes bringing them to pass in the most unexpected manner and by totally opposite means, had a different destiny for our friend Tom.

It so happened that one of the principal streets of our good town of Belford, a street the high road through which leading westward, bore the name of Bristol Street, boasted a bright red mansion, retired from the line of houses, with all the dignity of a dusty shrubbery, a sweep not very easy to turn, a glaring bit of blank wall, and a *porte cochère*. Now the wall being itself somewhat farther back than the other houses in the street, and the space between that and the ordinary pavement being regularly flagged, an old sailor without his legs had taken possession of the interval, for the sake of writing, with white and coloured chalks, sundry loyal sentences, such as “God save the King,” “Rule Britannia,” and so forth, by way of excitement to the passers-by to purchase one from a string of equally loyal sea-ballads that hung overhead, intermixed with twopenny portraits of eminent naval commanders, all very much alike, and all wearing very blue coats and very red faces.

At first, the two respectable ladies of the mansion (dowager spinsters, Morris by name) objected greatly to the use made of their wall and their pavement by the crippled veteran in question, who was commonly known throughout Belford by the name of “Poor Jack ;” probably from his attachment to the well-known sailor’s ditty, which happened to form his first introduction to the younger of the two ladies in question : —

“ Here am I, poor Jack,
Just come home from sea,
With shiners in my sack, —
Pray what d’ye think of me ? ”

“ I think you a very saucy person,” replied Miss Arabella Morris to this question, not said but sung by the sailor in a most stentorian voice, as he lay topping and tailing the great I

in "God save great George our King," just on one side of their gate. "I think you are a very saucy person," quoth Miss Arabella, "to sit begging here, just at our door."

"Begging!" rejoined poor Jack; "I'm no beggar, I hope. I lost my precious limbs, when I fought under Admiral Rodney; I've a pension, bless his Majesty, and have no call to disparage the service by begging like a land-lubber."

' Sailors to forget their duty,
Must not come for to go' —

chanted Jack.

"I must really apply to the mayor," said Miss Arabella.

"Go," said Jack, continuing his work and resuming his stave.

' When the captain he heard of it,
He very much applauded what she had done,
And he made her the first lieutenant
Of the gallant Thunder bomb.' "

"Made me a first lieutenant!" exclaimed the affronted Arabella. "Was ever any thing so impertinent? Pray, if you are not a beggar, what may you be?"

" My name, d'ye see, 's Tom Tough,
Oh, I've seen a little sarvice,
Where the foaming billows roar and the winds do blow;
I've sailed with noble Howe,
And I've sailed with gallant Jervis,
And only lost an eye, and got a timber toe;
And more if you'd be knowing,
I've sailed with old Boscawen: "

again shouted (for singing is hardly the word to express his sort of music) the incorrigible Jack.

"Well, I must go to the mayor," said Miss Arabella; and Jack again uplifted his voice: —

" Then in Providence I trust,
For you know what must be, must: "

and, consoled by this philosophical strain, he tranquilly continued his occupation, which, after a little persuasion from the mayor, and something like an apology from Jack himself (to whose looks and ways they began to get accustomed), the good ladies permitted him to pursue in peace and quietness under their sheltering wall.

The above conversation will have shown that poor Jack was something of a humorist; but his invincible good humour was his distinguishing qualification. I doubt if there was in all

England a more contented person than the poor cripple who picked up a precarious livelihood by selling loyal ballads in Bristol-street, in Belford. Maimed as he was, there was something in his round bullet-head, and rough sun-burnt countenance,—in his nod, his wink, his grin (for it would not do to call such a contortion a smile), in the snap of his fingers, and the roll of his short athletic body—more expressive of fun and merriment than I ever beheld in any human being. Call him poor Jack, indeed! Why, if happiness be wealth, he was the richest Jack in Christendom!

So thought Tom Lyndham, whose road to and from school passed the *lair* of the sailor, and who having stood one evening to hear him go through the whole ballad,

“On board of the *Arethusa*,”

and finally joined in the *refrain* with much of Jack's own spirit, fell into conversation with him on the battles he had fought, the ships he had served in, and the heroes he had served under (and it was remarkable that Jack talked of the ships with the same sort of personal affection which he displayed towards their captains), and from that evening made up his mind that he would be a sailor too.

Sooth to say, the enthusiasm with which Jack spoke of Keppel and Rodney, and Parker and Howe, as well as of the commanders of his youth, Hawke and “old Boscawen”—his graphic description of the sea-fights in which the English flag did really seem to be the ensign of victory—the rough, bold, manly tone of the ballads which he sung, and the personal character of the narrator—were in themselves enough to work such an effect on a lively, spirited, ambitious boy, whose bravery of mind and hardihood of body made him account toil and danger rather as elements of enjoyment, like the bright frosty air of winter, than as evils to shrink from; whilst his love of distinction made him covet glory for its own sake, and his grateful and affectionate temper rendered the prospect of wealth (for of course he was to be a second Rodney) delightful as the means of repaying to his aunt and Mr. Singleton the benefits which he had derived from their kindness.

Besides this, he had always had an innate passion for the water. His earliest pranks of dabbling in kennels, and plunging in pools, had shown his duck-like propensities; and

half his scrapes at school had occurred in a similar way:—bathing before the appointed day, swimming in dangerous places, rowing and fishing at forbidden hours; he had been caught half-a-dozen times boat-building at the wharf, and had even been detected in substituting Robinson Crusoe for the Greek grammar—from which Mr. Singleton expected such miracles. In short, Tom Lyndham was one of those boys whose genius may fairly be called semi-aquatic.

That he would be a sailor was Tom's firm resolution. His only doubt was, whether to accomplish the object in the regular manner by apprising Mrs. Martin and Mr. Singleton of his wishes, or to embrace the speedier and less troublesome method of running away. The latter mode offered the great temptation of avoiding remonstrances equally tedious (and the grateful boy would hardly allow himself to think *how* tedious!) and unavailing, and of escaping from the persuasions of which his affectionate heart felt in anticipation the power to grieve, though not to restrain; besides, it was the approved fashion of your young adventurer,—Robinson Crusoe had run away; and he consulted Jack seriously on the measure, producing, in answer to certain financial questions which the experience of the tar suggested, a new half-crown, two shillings, a crooked sixpence, and sundry halfpence, as his funds for the expedition.

“Five and threepence halfpenny!” exclaimed the prudent mariner, counting the money, and shaking his head,—“’Twon’t do, master! Consider, there’s the voyage to Portsmouth, on board o’ the what d’ye call ’um, the coach there; and then you’ll want new rigging, and have to lie at anchor a shortish bit may be, before you get afloat. I’ll tell you what, messmate, leave’s light; ax his honour the chaplain, the curate, or whatever you call him, and if so be he turns cantankerous, you can but cut and run after all.”

And Tom agreed to take his advice; and after settling in his own mind as he walked home various ingenious plans for breaking the matter gradually and tenderly to his good old aunt (on whom he relied for the still more arduous task of communicating this tremendous act of contumacy to his reverend patron), he, from sheer nervousness and over-excitement, bolted into the house, and forgetting all his intended preparations and softenings,—a thing which has often hap-

pened, from the same causes, to older and wiser persons, — shouted out at once to Mrs. Martin, who happened to be in the shop talking to Mr. Singleton, “Aunt, I’m determined to go to sea directly ; and if you won’t let me, I’ll run away.”

Never were two people more astonished. And as the hitherto respectful and dutiful boy, who with all his spirit had never before contradicted a wish expressed by either, continued to answer to all remonstrances, “I will go to sea ; and if you won’t let me, I’ll run away ;” Mr. Singleton began to think it best to inquire into his own views, motives, and prospects.

Vague enough they were to be sure ! Robinson Crusoe, and a crippled sailor, and half-a-dozen ballads for inducements, and a letter of introduction from poor Jack to a certain veteran of his own standing, Bob Griffin by name, formerly a boatswain, and now keeping a public-house at Portsea, and *commanding*, according to him of the stumps, a chain of interest, somewhat resembling Tom Bowling’s famous ladder of promotion in Roderick Random, a scrawl directed in red chalk in printed letters half an inch long, to MISTUR BOB GRIFIN LANLURD SHIP AGRUND PORSEE, by way of introduction to the naval service of Great Britain ! However, there was in the earnestness of the lad, in the very slightness of the means on which he built, and in his bold, ardent, and manly character, that evidence of the bent of his genius, the strong and decided turn for one pursuit and one only, which it is scarcely wise to resist.

Mr. Singleton, remembering, perhaps, the prediction of the good doctor, yielded. He happened to have a first cousin, a captain in the navy ; and on visiting our friend Jack, whom he found repairing the chalking of “Rule Britannia,” and chanting two lines of his favourite stave,

“But the worst of it was when the little ones were sickly,
Whether they would live or die the doctor could not tell,”

he had the satisfaction to find that he had sailed with his relation when second lieutenant of a sloop called the *Gazelle* ; and although relinquishing, with many thanks, the letter of introduction to “Mistur Bob Grifin,” actually accepted one from the same hard honest fist to Captain Conyers ; and it is to be doubted whether poor Jack’s recommendation of the “tight youngster,” as the veteran called him, had not as much

to do with the captain's cordial reception of his new midshipman, as the more elaborate praises of Mr. Singleton.

A midshipman, however, he was. The war was at its height, and he had the luck (excellent luck as he thought it) to be in the very hottest of its fury. In almost every fight of the great days of our naval glory, the days of Nelson and his immediate successors, was Tom Lyndham first of the first, bravest of the brave, readiest of the ready. From the moment that his age and rank allowed him to be officially noticed in the despatches, he was so ; and it is to be questioned whether the very happiest moment of Mr. Singleton's life was not that in which he first read Tom's name in the Gazette. He cried like a child ; and then he read to Mrs. Martin, and whilst trying to lecture her for crying, cried again himself. He took the paper round the town to every house of decent gentility, from the mayor's downwards ; read it to the parish-clerk, and the sexton ; and finally relinquished an evening party to which he was engaged at the Miss Morris's, to carry the news and the newspaper to poor Jack, who, grown too infirm to face the weather, had been comfortably placed, through his kindness, in an almshouse about two miles off. It is even reported that, on this occasion, Mr. Singleton, although by no means noted for his skill in music, was so elated as to join poor Jack in the chorus of

“ On board of the Arethusa,”

in honour of Tom Lyndham.

From this time all prospered with our gallant sailor, — except, indeed, a few glorious scars which he would have been ashamed to want, and one of which, just after he had been appointed first lieutenant to the *Diana*, gave him the opportunity of coming back to Belford, for a short time, to regain his health, and revisit his old friends. Think of the delight of Mr. Singleton, of Mrs. Martin, of her maid Peggy, and of poor Jack !

“ Here am I, poor Jack !”

shouted the veteran, when Tom made his appearance ;

“ Here am I, poor Jack,
Just come home from sea,
With shiners in my sack,—
Pray what d'ye think of me ?”

And the above, as it happened, was highly appropriate ; for, between battles and prizes, Mr. Lyndham, although still so young a man, was rich enough to allow him to display his frank and noble generosity of spirit in the most delicate way to Mr. Singleton and his aunt, and in the most liberal to Jack and Peggy. None who had been kind to him were forgotten ; and his delightful spirit and gaiety, his animated good humour, his acuteness and intelligence, rendered him the very life of the place.

He was a singularly fine young man too ; not tall, but strong, muscular, and well-built, with a noble chest, and that peculiar carriage of the head, which gives so much of dignity to the air and figure. The head itself was full of manliness and expression. The short curling black hair, already giving token of early baldness, and exposing a high, broad, polished forehead, whose fairness contrasted with the sun-burnt complexion of the rest of the face ; an eagle eye, a mouth combining firmness and sweetness, regular features, and a countenance at once open, spirited, and amiable,—harmonised well with a character and reputation of which his fellow-townsmen already felt proud. Tom Lyndham was the very pride of Belford ; happy was the damsel whom he honoured with his hand at the monthly assembly ; and, when he rejoined his ship, he was said to have carried away, unintentionally, more hearts than had been won with care, and pain, and malice prepense, by any half-dozen flirting recruiting-officers in the last half-dozen years.

No Belford beauty was, however, destined to captivate the brave sailor. Love and fortune had prepared for him a very different destiny.

Returning home towards the end of the war, (I mean the great war, the war *par excellence*, the war with Napoleon,) into Portsmouth Harbour, or rather bringing in a prize, a frigate of many more guns and much greater force than his own, the gallant Captain Lyndham (for he had now been for some years posted) no sooner set foot on shore, than he encountered an old messmate. “Ha, Lyndham ! your old luck, I see ! You and the little *Laodamia* have peppered the Frenchmen, as usual,” said the brave Captain Manning. “Do you make any stay at Portsmouth ?”

“Yes,” replied Captain Lyndham ; “I have sent my first

lieutenant to London with despatches, and shall be fixed here for some days."

"I am thoroughly glad to hear it," rejoined his friend; "for I myself am rather awkwardly situated. An old aunt of mine has just brought two of my cousins to see the lions, depending upon me for their escort. Now I must be off to the Admiralty immediately; dare not stay another hour for all the aunts and cousins in Christendom. They, poor souls, don't know a creature in the place; and I shall be eternally obliged to you if you will take my turn of duty, and walk them over the dockyards, and so forth. By the way, they are nice girls — not sisters, but cousins. One is an heiress, with above 3000*l.* a-year, and a sweet place by the side of the Wye; the other is called a beauty. I don't think her so; or, rather, I prefer the heiress. But nice girls they are both. I have the honour to be their guardian, and if either should hit your fancy, you have my free leave to win her and wear her. So now come with me, and I'll introduce you."

And in five minutes more they were in one of the best rooms at the Fountain, and Captain Lyndham was introduced to Mrs. Lacy, and to Miss Manning, and Miss Sophia Manning.

Mrs. Lacy was a lady-like elderly woman, a widow without a family, and very fond of her nieces, who had been brought up under her own eye, and seemed to supply to her the place of daughters. "This is the heiress!" thought Captain Lyndham, as he glanced over a tall commanding figure, expensively and fashionably dressed, and with that decided air of consequence and self-importance which the habit of power is too apt to give to a person in that unfortunate predicament. "This is the heiress, and this, I suppose, must be the beauty," thought Captain Lyndham, turning to a shorter, slenderer, fairer young woman, very simply dressed, but all blushes and smiles, and youthful animation. "This must be the beauty," thought the captain, "and whatever Manning may say, beautiful she is — never saw a sweeter creature than this Miss Sophy."

And if he thought Sophy Manning pretty then, the impression was far deepened when he had passed two or three days in her company — had walked her over the wonders of that floating world, a man of war — had shown her the dockyards,

with their miracles of machinery; and had even persuaded Mrs. Lacy, a timorous woman, the least in the world afraid of being drowned, and Miss Manning, a thorough fine lady, exceedingly troubled for her satin pelisse, first of all to take a dinner on board the dear *Laodamia*, and then to suffer themselves to be rowed round St. Helen's in the captain's own boat, gallantly manned by the officers of the ship.

Small enjoyment had Mrs. Lacy, in fear of her life, or the stately Honoria, in care for her finery; but Sophy, in a white gown and a straw bonnet, thinking nothing of herself or of her dress, but wholly absorbed by a keen and vivid interest in the detail of a sailor's life—in admiration of the order and cleanliness that everywhere met her eye (always the first point of astonishment to a landswoman), and in a still more intense feeling of pleasure and wonder at the careless good humour of those lords of the ocean, — bold as lions to their enemies, playful as kittens to their friends, — was full of delight. Nothing could equal her enthusiasm for the navy. The sailors, who, like dogs and children and women, and all other creatures who have not spoilt their fine natural instinct by an over-cultivation of the reasoning powers, are never mistaken in the truth of a feeling, and never taken in by its assumption, perceived it at once, and repaid it by the most unfeigned and zealous devotion. They took all possible care of Mrs. Lacy and Miss Manning, as women, and ladies, and friends of their captain; but Miss Sophy was the girl for them. They actually preferred her pretty face to the figure-head of the *Laodamia*.

And Captain Lyndham, himself an enthusiast for his profession, what thought he of this enthusiasm for the sea, and the navy, and that frigate of frigates, the *Laodamia*? Did he like it the less because he might honestly suspect that some little reference to himself had strengthened and quickened this deep interest? because she had drawn from him his own early history, and talked of the toy-shop in the marketplace of Belford, and of poor Jack, and the maid Peggy, and even of Mr. Singleton himself (little as one would think that good gentleman, now abroad with his second wife, was calculated to strike a young lady), with almost as much affection as of his frigate and his prize, and his ship's crew, and the absent first lieutenant, his especial friend, and

a little midshipman, his especial protégé? To any man of sensibility, this sensibility, shown by a woman, young, lovely, animated, and artless, would have been dangerous; to a sailor just come ashore it was irresistible. He made her talk in return of her own friends and pleasures and amusements, of her home at Sanbury, where she had lived all her life with her aunt and her cousin, and where she hoped always to live; ("not always," thought our friend the captain;) and how much more loveable those dear relations were in that dear home. "My aunt," said Sophy, "is nervous and timid, so that you know nothing of her but that infirmity; and dear Honor does not love travelling, and does not like the sea, and has been all her life so much admired, that she is a little spoilt, and does not always know what she would have; but you will love Honor when you see her at home."

"I may like her," said the captain, "but I shall never love any woman but one;" and then followed, in full form the declaration and the acceptance. "I am so glad that you are not the heiress," added Captain Lyndham, after repeating to her her cousin's jesting permission to him to marry which of his wards he liked best; "I am so glad that you are not the heiress!"

"Are you?" said Sophy, quietly. "Now I should have thought that you, thorough sportsman as you are for a sailor," added Sophy slyly, "would have liked Sanbury Manor, with its right of shooting, coursing, and fishing, and its glorious Wye river. You would like Sanbury Manor."

"Hang Sanbury Manor!" exclaimed the captain.

"Nay," said Sophy, "it's a pretty place, and a pretty house; one of those old-fashioned houses that fall upon the eye like a picture. The very lodge at Sanbury is beautiful. You must not take an aversion to Sanbury."

"I should like any place that had been your home, pretty or ugly," replied Captain Lyndham; "or rather, I should think any house pretty that you lived in. But nevertheless I am heartily glad that you are not the heiress of Sanbury, because I have been so fortunate with prizes, and you seem so simple in your tastes, that I have enough for both of us; and now no one can even suspect me of being mercenary — of thinking of anything or anybody but your own dear self."

"I should not have suspected you," said Sophy tenderly; "but you must go to Sanbury, and look at the old place, my home for so many years; you promise me that?"

"Yes," replied the captain, "but it must be with Sophy Lyndham, and not with Sophy Manning;" — and, in spite of Sophy's blushing "must indeed!" so it was settled. They were all to go to London, to which the affairs of his ship and his prize now called the captain. There they were to be married; and on their return from a bridal excursion to Bath and Clifton, and Wales, were to pay a short visit to Mrs. Lacy and Honor, at the old manor-house, which had for so many years been the fair bride's only home.

Mrs. Lacy, on being apprised of the intended marriage, began talking about money and settlements, and those affairs which, to persons not in love, seem so important; but Captain Lyndham stopped her, and Sophy stopped her; and as, in a letter to Captain Manning, the generous sailor desired that writings might be prepared, by which all that he was worth in the world should be settled on Sophy and her children — and as these settlements, read over by the lawyer in the usual unintelligible manner, were signed by the enamoured seaman without the slightest examination, it was impossible for any guardian to object to conduct so confiding and so liberal.

"Oh that poor Jack could see this day!" was Captain Lyndham's exclamation, as they were leaving London after the happy ceremony, in his own elegant new carriage, attended, somewhat to his surprise, by the lady's-maid, whom he had thought exclusively devoted to the service of Miss Manning. — "Oh that poor Jack could see this day! — you must make acquaintance with him, Sophy, and with my good aunt, and Mr. Singleton. You must know them, Sophy; they will so adore you!"

"And I shall so love the people whom you love," rejoined Sophy: but we have no room for bridal talk, and must hasten to the conclusion of our story.

After a few days of rapid travelling, — short days they seemed to the married lovers, — after a very brief tour, for the bridegroom's time was limited, — they arrived at the beautiful village of Sanbury.

"There it is — the dear manor-house!" exclaimed Sophy, as they approached a fine old building, embosomed in its own

venerable oaks, the silver Wye winding like a shining snake amid the woody hills and verdant lawns; — “There it is!” exclaimed the fair bride; “mine own dear home! And your home, too, my own dear husband! for, being mine, it is yours,” continued she, with a smile that would have made a man overlook a greater misfortune than that of having married an heiress. “You are really the master of Sanbury, think of it what you may,” pursued the fair bride. “It is my first deceit, and shall be my last. But when I found that because Honoria was the elder, you took her for the richer cousin, I could not resist the temptation of this little surprise; and if you are angry, there,” pointing to the side of the road, “sits one who will plead for me.”

And suddenly, from the beautiful rustic lodge, the gate belonging to which had been so arranged as to open with a pulley, arose the well-known sounds,

“Here am I, poor Jack,
Just come home from sea,
With shiners in my sack,—
Pray what d’ye think of me?”

And there sat poor Jack himself in all his glory, waving his hat over his grey head, with the tears streaming down his honest cheeks, absolutely tipsy with joy.

And before Captain Lyndham had sufficiently recovered from his astonishment to speak a word — indeed, whilst he was still clasping his lovely wife to his own warm heart, the carriage had reached the mansion, on the steps of which stood, in one happy group, her people and his; Captain Manning, Mrs. Lacy, and Honor (then really beautiful in her smiling sympathy), Mr. Singleton (who by good luck had just returned to England), Mrs. Martin, and the little maid Peggy, standing behind on the upper step, and looking two inches taller in her joy and delight.

So much for the Sailor’s Wedding. There can be no need to say, that the married life which sprang from such a beginning was as happy as it was prosperous.

COUNTRY EXCURSIONS.

SOME celebrated writer (is it Addison?) cites, as a proof of the instinctive love of the country, which seems implanted in the human breast, the fact, that the poorest inhabitants of great cities cherish in their wretched garrets or cellars some dusty myrtle or withering geranium, something that vegetates and should be green; so that you shall see in the meanest window of the meanest street some flower or flowering plant stuck in a piece of broken crockery — a true and genuine tribute to that inherent love of nature which makes a part of our very selves. I never see such a symptom of the yearning after green fields without recognising the strong tie of fellow-feeling with the poor inmate; and the more paltry the plant, the more complete and perfect is the sympathy.

There is a character in one of the old plays (I think "The Jovial Crew," by Ben Jonson's servant Broome), who conducts himself like a calm, sedate, contented justice's clerk all the winter, but who, at the first sign of spring, when the sap mounts into the trees and the primrose blossoms in the coppices, feels the impulse of the season irresistible, obeys literally the fine stage-direction of the piece, "The nightingale calls without," and sallies forth to join the gipsies, to ramble all day in the green lanes, and sleep at night under the hedges.*

Now, one of the greatest proofs of the truth of these delineations was to be found in the fact, that the quiet old ladies of Belford, the demure spinsters and bustling widows, to say nothing of their attendant beaux, were themselves seized, two or three times in the course of the summer, with the desire of a country excursion. It is true that they were not penned up like the poor artizans of London, or even the equally pitiable official personage of the old dramatist — they were not literally caged birds, and Belford was not London: on the contrary,

* A friend of mine, one of the most accomplished men and eloquent preachers in London, says that, as the spring advances, he feels exactly the yearning for the country described by the old dramatists. He does not join the gipsies; but he declares that it requires all the force of his mind, as well as the irresistible claims of the most binding of all professions, to detain him in London. Talk of slavery! Are we not all the bondsmen of circumstances, the thralls of conscience and of duty? Where is he that is free?

most of them had little slips of garden-ground, dusty and smoky, where currants and gooseberries came to nothing, and even the sweet weed mignonette refused to blow; and many of them lived on the outskirts of the town, and might have walked country-ward if they would; but they were bound by the minute and strong chains of habit, and could turn no other way than to the street — the dull, darksome, dingy street. Their feet had been so used to the pavement, that they had lost all relish for the elastic turf of the greensward. Even the roadside paths were too soft for their tread. Flagstones for them; and turf, although smooth, and fine, and thick, and springy as a Persian carpet — although fragrant and aromatic as a bed of thyme — turf for those who liked it!

Two or three times in the year, however, even these street-loving ladies were visited with a desire to breathe a freer air, and become dames and damsels errantes for the day. The great river that glided so magnificently under the ridge of the Upton hills, within a mile of the town, seemed to offer irresistible temptations to a water-party, the more so as some very fine points of river scenery were within reach, and the whole course of the stream, whether sweeping grandly along its own rich and open meadows, or shut in by steep woody banks, was marked with great and varied beauty. But, somehow or other, a water-party was too much for them. The river was navigable; and in that strange and almost startling process of being raised or sunken in the locks, there was a real or an apparent danger that would have discomposed their nerves and their dignity. Middle-aged ladies should not squall if they can help it. The spinsters of Belford had an instinctive perception of the truth of this axiom; and although Mr. Singleton, who liked the diversion of gudgeon-fishing (the only fishing, as far as I can perceive, which requires neither trouble, nor patience, nor skill, and in which, if you put the line in, you are pretty sure within a few minutes to pull a fish out) — although Mr. Singleton, who liked this quiet sport, often tried to tempt his female friends into a sober water-frolic, he never could succeed. Water-parties were reserved for the families of the neighbourhood.

And perhaps the ladies of Belford were the wiser of the two. Far be it from me to depreciate the water! writing as I am at four o'clock P. M. on the twenty-sixth of this hot, sunny,

drouthy August, in my own little garden — which has already emptied two ponds, and is likely to empty the brook — my garden, the watering of which takes up half the time of three people, and which, although watered twice a day, does yet, poor thing ! look thirsty — and, for my garden, prematurely shabby and old ; and who, dearly as I love that paradise of flowers, have yet, under the influence of the drought, and the heat, and the glare of the sunshine, been longing all day to be lying under the great oak by the pool, at our own old place, looking through the green green leaves, at the blue blue sky, and listening to the cattle as they plashed in the water ; or better still, to be in Mr. Lawson's little boat — that boat which is the very model of shape and make, rowed by that boatman of boatmen, and companion of companions, and friend of friends, up his own Loddon river, from the fishing-house at Aberleigh, his own beautiful Aberleigh, under the turfy terraces and majestic avenues of the park, and through that world of still, peaceful, and secluded water meadows, where even the shy kingfisher, who retires before cultivation and population with the instinct of the Red Indian, is not afraid to make her nest, until we approach as nearly as in rowing we can approach to the main spring head (for, like the Nile, the Loddon has many sources) of that dark, clear, and brimming river ; or, best perhaps of all, to be tossing about as we were last Wednesday, on the lake at Gore Mount, sailing, not rowing — that was too slow for our ambition — sailing at the rate of ten knots an hour, under the guidance of the gallant Captain Lumley, revelling in the light breeze and the inspiring motion, delighted with the petty difficulties and the pleasant mistakes of our good-humoured crew — landsmen who did not even understand the language of their brave commander — now touching at an island, now weathering a cape, enjoying to its very height the varied loveliness of that loveliest spot, and only lamenting that the day *would* close, and that we *must* land. I for my part could have been content to have floated on that lake for ever.

Far be it from me, who have been all the morning longing, panting as it were, for the water, for its freshness, its coolness, its calm repose, its vivid life, to depreciate water-parties ! And yet, in this fickle climate of ours, where a warm summer is one rarity, and a dry summer is another, they are not often

found to answer. To have a boat and a river as Mr. Lawson has, and his own thews and sinews for rowing, and his own good-will for the choice of time ; or to command, as they do at Gore Mount, lake and boat and boatmen, and party, so as to catch the breeze and the sunshine, and the humour and inclination of the company ; to have, in short, the power of going when you like and how you like — is the true way to enjoy the water. In a set expedition, arranged a week or ten days beforehand, the weather is commonly wet, or it is cold, or it is showery, or it is thundery, or it threatens to be one or other of these bad things : and the aforesaid weather having no great reputation, those of the party who pique themselves on prudence shake their heads, and tap their barometers, and hum and ha, and finally stay at home. Or even if the weather be favourable, and the people well-assorted (which by the bye seldom happens), twenty accidents may happen to derange the pleasure of the day. One of the most promising parties of that kind which I remember, was entirely upset by the casualty of casting anchor for dinner in the neighbourhood of three wasps' nests. Moving afterwards did no good, though in mere despair move of course we did. The harpies had got scent of the food, and followed and ate, and buzzed and stung, and poisoned all the comfort of the festival. There was nothing for it but to fling the dinner into the river, and row off home as fast as possible. And even if these sort of mishaps could be guarded against (which they cannot), boating is essentially a youthful amusement. The gentlemen should be able to row upon occasion, and the ladies to sing ; and a dance on the green is as necessary an accessory to a water-party as a ballet to an opera.

Now, as in spite of some occasional youthful visitor, some unlucky god-daughter, or much-to-be-pitied niece, the good ladies of Belford — those who formed its most select and exclusive society — were, it must be confessed, mostly of that age politely called uncertain, but which is to every eye, practised or unpractised, one of the most certain in the world ; they did very wisely to eschew excursions on the broad river. Nobody not very sure of being picked up, should ever put herself in danger of falling overboard. No lady not sure of being listened to, should ever adventure the peril of a squall. Accordingly, they stuck firmly to *terra firma*.

The selection of places for a land expedition, presented, however, considerable difficulties. One would have thought that the fair garrison of Belford might have made a sortie through any gate of the town, pretty much as it happened, sure of meeting everywhere good roads and pleasant spots in a country full of green pastoral valleys, of breezy downs and shady woodlands. There was, however, always considerable hesitation, doubt, and delay in fixing on the favoured scene of their tranquil amusement. Perhaps this difficulty made a part of the pleasure, by prolonging the discussion, and introducing those little interludes of *tracasserie*, and canvassing, and opposition—those pretty mockeries of care, which they who have no real trouble are often found to delight in, stirring the tranquil waters of a too calm existence, and setting intentionally the puddle in a storm.

“Why, if the castle be too far,” grumbled Miss Arabella Morris to her sister, “why not go to the gardens at Wyndhurst? I dare say we could have our dinner in the Fishing-seat; and anything would be better than that tiresome Warren House, where we have been for the last half-dozen years, and where there is no reason on earth for our going that I can discover, except that Mrs. Colby’s maid’s father keeps the lodge, and that Dr. Fenwick likes the stewed carp. Why should we be managed by Mrs. Colby I wonder? For my part, I have a great mind not to join the party.”

“Only think of our going to the Warren House again!” said Lady Dixon, the not over rich widow of a corporation knight, to her cousin Miss Bates, who lived with her as a sort of humble companion; “only think of that odious Warren House, when the ruins are but three miles farther, and so much more agreeable—a pic-nic in the old walls!—how nice that would be this hot weather, among the ivy and ash trees, instead of being stewed up in the Warren House, just to please Mrs. Colby! It would serve her right if we were all to stay at home.”

And Miss Bates gave, as usual, a dutiful assent; and yet Mrs. Colby had her way, and to the Warren House they went—the two Misses Morris, Miss Blackall, Lady Dixon, Mrs. Colby herself, and the beaux of the party.

Mrs. Colby was one of those persons whose indomitable self-will does contrive to carry all before it. She was a little

bustling woman, neither young nor old, neither pretty nor ugly ; not lady-like, and yet by no means vulgar ; certainly not well-read, but getting on all the better for her want of information, — not, as is the usual way, by pleading ignorance, and exaggerating and lamenting her deficiency — but by a genuine and masterful contempt of acquirement in others, which made educated people, if they happened to be modest, actually ashamed of their own cultivation : “ I’m no musician, thank God ! Heaven be praised, I know nothing of Poetry ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Colby ; and her abashed hearers felt they had nothing to do but to “ drown their books,” and shut up their pianos.

For this influence she was indebted entirely to her own force of character and her natural shrewdness of mind ; since, so far were her pretensions to superiority from being borne out by fortune or position, that, moderately endowed with the gifts of fortune as her companions were, she was probably by very much the poorest amongst them, living in paltry lodgings with one solitary maid-servant ; whilst upon the very ticklish points of birth and gentility her claims were still more equivocal, she having now resided for ten years at Belford without any one having yet discovered more of her history than that she was a widow : what her husband had been, or who was her father — whether she came from the east, the west, the north, or the south, still remained a mystery. Nobody had even been lucky enough to find out her maiden name.

Of one thing her acquaintances were pretty sure, — that if her family and connections had been such as to do her credit in society, Mrs. Colby was not the woman to keep them concealed. Another fact appears to me equally certain, — that if any one of the gossiping sisterhood who applied themselves to the examination of her history had been half as skilful in such inquiries as herself, the whole story of her life — her birth, parentage and education — would have been laid open in a month. But they were simple inquisitors, bunglers in the great art of meddling with other people’s concerns, and Mrs. Colby baffled their curiosity in the best of all ways — by seeming perfectly unconscious of having excited such a feeling.

So completely did she evade speaking of her own concerns (a subject which most people find particularly agreeable), that the fact of her widowhood had been rather inferred from the

plain gold circlet on the third finger of the left hand, and a very rare and very slight mention of "poor Mr. Colby," than from any direct communication even to those with whom she was most intimate. Another fact was also inferred by a few shrewd observers, who found amusement in watching the fair lady's manœuvres, — namely, that although when occasionally speaking of "poor Mr. Colby's" tastes and habits — such as his love of 'schalots with his beef-steak, and his predilection for red mullet — she had never failed to accompany those tender reminiscences with a decorous accompaniment of sighs and pensive looks, yet that she was by no means so devoted to the memory of her first husband as to render her at all averse to the notion of a second. On the contrary, she was apparently exceedingly well disposed to pay that sort of compliment to the happiness she had enjoyed in one marriage, which is comprised in an evident desire to try her fate in another. Whatever might have been her original name, it was quite clear to nice observers, that she would not entertain the slightest objection to change that which she at present bore as soon as might be, provided always that the exchange were in a pecuniary point of view sufficiently advantageous.

Nice observers, as I have said, remarked this; but we are not to imagine that Mrs. Colby was of that common and vulgar race of husband-hunters, whose snares are so obvious, and whose traps are so glaring, that the simplest bird that ever was caught in a springe can hardly fail to be aware of his danger. Our widow had too much tact for that. She went cautiously and delicately to work, advancing as stealthily as a parlour cat who meditates an attack on the cream-jug, and drawing back as demurely as the aforesaid sagacious quadruped, when she perceives that the treasure is too well guarded, and that her attempts will end in detection and discomfiture.

It was only by slight indications that Mrs. Colby's designs became suspected: — for instance, her neighbour, Mr. Selwood the attorney, lost his wife, and Mrs. Colby immediately became fond of children, spent a world of money in dolls and gingerbread, and having made herself popular amongst all the young ladies and gentlemen of Belford between the ages of eight and two, established a peculiar intimacy with Misses Mary and Eliza, and Masters John and Arthur Selwood; played at domino and cat's-cradle with the girls, at trap-ball and cricket

with the boys; courted the nurse, was civil to the nursery-maid, and made as judicious an attack upon the papa's heart, through the medium of the children, as could well be devised. She failed, probably because that worthy person, Mr. John Selwood, attorney-at-law, was not much troubled with the commodity commonly called a heart. He was a kind father and a good-humoured man; but matrimony was with him as much a matter of business as with Mrs. Colby, and, about fourteen months after the death of his wife, he brought home as his spouse a wealthy maiden from a distant county who was far from professing any inordinate love for children in general, and had never set eyes upon his, but who, nevertheless, made as good a step-mother as if she had played at trap-ball and cat's-cradle all the days of her life.

Her next attempt was on a young physician, a bachelor, whose sister, who had hitherto kept his house, was on the point of marriage — an opportunity that seemed too good to be lost, there being no axiom more current in society than the necessity of a wife to a medical man. Accordingly she had a severe illness and a miraculous recovery; declared that the doctor's skill and assiduity had saved her life, became his *prôneuse* in all the Belford coteries, got him two or three patients, and would certainly have caught her man, only that he happened to be Scotch, and was saved from the peril matrimonial by his national caution.

Then she fixed her eye on a recruiting officer, a man of some family and reputed fortune; but he was Irish, and the national instinct saved him.

Then she turned her attention towards Mr. Singleton, who dear man, soon let her know with his accustomed simplicity, that he could not possibly marry till he got a living.

Then she resumed her fondness for children, which had lain in abeyance since Mr. Selwood's affair, on the occasion of an ex-curate of St. Stephen's setting up a higher class of preparatory school; but it turned out that he took the school to enable him to marry a woman whom he loved — and so that card failed her.

Then she turned sickly again (delicate is the more lady-like phrase), in order to be cured by the ale of a rich old bachelor brewer, and went about the town crying up his XX, as she had formerly done the doctor's drugs; and then (for of course she did

not catch the old bachelor) she carried all Belford to buy bargains of a smart linen-draper just set up in the market-place, and extolled his ribbons and muslins with as much unction as she had bestowed on the brewer's beer, or the physician's prescriptions, or Mr. Selwood's boys and girls ; but all in vain ! The linen-draper played her the worst trick of all. He was married already — married before ever he saw Belford, or was patronised by Mrs. Colby. N. B. — I cannot help thinking that these two last conjectures are rather super-subtle, and hold with another particular friend of the lady's (for they could only have been her very particular friends who watched with such amusement and recorded with such fidelity her several failures and mortifications), that her attentions to the XX and the linen drapery might be accounted for on other grounds ; and that a desire to obtain a certain green shawl under prime cost, and a barrel of strong beer for nothing, in both which objects she succeeded, would supply a reasonable and characteristic motive for her puffery in both cases.

One thing is certain : that after the series of fruitless schemes which we have enumerated, Mrs. Colby seemed so far discouraged as to intermit, if not wholly relinquish, her designs on that ungrateful half of the creation called man, and to direct her entire attention to the softer-hearted and more impressible sex to which she herself belonged. Disappointed in love, she devoted herself, as the fashion is amongst ladies of her class, to an exclusive and by no means unprofitable friendship.

The friend on whom she pitched was one of the richest and simplest spinsters in all Belford. A good, harmless, comfortable woman, somewhat broader than she was high, round as a ball, smooth as satin, soft as silk, red as a rose, quiet as a dormouse, was Miss Blackall. Her age might be five-and-forty or thereabout ; and to any one who knew her small wit and easy fortune, it was matter of some surprise that she should have lived so many years in the world without becoming, in some form or other, the prey of one of the many swindlers with which the age abounds. She had, however, always been under some sort of tutelage, and had hitherto been lucky in her guardians. First of all, her father and mother took care of her ; and, when they died, her brother and sister : they marrying, consigned her to a careful duenna,

who bore the English title of lady's maid ; and on her abdicating her post, Miss Blackall fell into the hands of Mrs. Colby.

The reason of Mrs. Tabitha's leaving a family over which she ruled with the absolute sway that in this country of freedom is so often conceded to a lady's maid (a race far more our mistresses than we are theirs), was a quarrel with her lady's favourite parrot.

Vert-vert (for this accomplished feathered orator was named after the hero of Gresset's delightful poem) was a bird of singular acquirement and sagacity. There was a spirit of dialogue in his fluent talk which really implied his understanding what was said to him. Not only did Vert-vert, like the Irish echo in the story, answer "Very well, I thank you," to "How d'ye do?" and so on with a hundred common questions — for that might proceed merely from an effort of memory — from his having (in theatrical phrase) a good study, and recollecting his cues as well as his part ; but there was about him a power of holding a sustained and apparently spontaneous conversation, which might have occasioned much admiration, and some perplexity, in wiser women than Miss Blackall.

In the matter of personal identity he was seldom mistaken. He would call the whole household by name, and was never known to confound one individual with another. He was a capital mimic, and had the faculty, peculiar to that order of wits, of counterfeiting not merely tone and voice, and accent and expression, but even the sense or nonsense of the person imitated ; spoke as if the same mind were acting upon the same organs, and poured forth not only such things as they had said, but such as they were likely to say. The good-natured twaddle and drawling non-ideas of his mistress, for instance, who had rather less sense and fewer words than an ordinary child of four years old ; the sharp acidity of Mrs. Tabitha, who, with everybody but her lady, and sometimes with her, was a shrew of the first water ; the slip-slop and gossiping of the housemaid, the solemn self-importance of the cook, and the jargon and mingled simplicity and cunning of the black footman, — were all given to the life.

To the black footman Vert-vert had originally belonged, and it was mainly to the great fancy that Miss Blackall at first sight took to the bird, which on offering himself as a candidate for her service he had had the shrewdness to bring

with him, that Pompey owed the honour and happiness of exhibiting his shining face and somewhat clumsy person in a flaming livery of white and scarlet and silver lace, which set off his sooty complexion with all the advantage of contrast. She bought the bird and hired the man ; and from the first instant that Vert-vert's gorgeous cage swung in her drawing-room, the parrot became her prime favourite, and Mrs. Tabitha's influence was sensibly diminished.

That this might occasion in the mind of the soubrette an unusual portion of ill-will (which amiable feeling we rational beings generally reserve for the benefit of our own species), is beyond all manner of doubt ; and the parrot — who, amongst his other extraordinary gifts, had his fancies and aversions, with cause and without, and loved and hated like any Christian — did not fail to return the compliment, and detested Mrs. Tabitha with all his heart. He was sure to bite her fingers whenever, in compliance with her lady's orders, she attempted to feed him ; and mocked her, taunted her, and laughed at her in a manner which, as the unfortunate object of his jibes was wont to assert, was never heard of before in a feathered creature ! Well was it for Vert-vert that the days of witchery were gone by, or most assuredly Tabitha would have arraigned him before the tribunals of the land, and have had him roasted, feathers and all, as something “no' canny” ! I am far from certain that she for her particular part, did not really suspect him of being somewhat elfish or fiendish, — a sort of imp in disguise, sent into the world for her especial torment ; and the sable colour of his quondam master served to confirm the impression.

The immediate cause of offence was, it must be confessed, provoking enough. “Tabitha ! Tabitha ! Tabitha !” ejaculated the bird one day from his cage on the landing-place, as the damsel in question was ascending the stairs ; “Tabitha, you're an old fright !”

“What !” exclaimed the affronted damsel, remonstrating as if addressing a human being ; “what is that you dare to say ?”

“Look in the glass, Tabitha !” replied the parrot, swinging himself with great nonchalance in the sort of wire circle suspended from the centre of his large and commodious gilt cage : “Look in the glass, and you'll see a cross-grained, squinting, shrivelled old fright !”

The allusion to her personal defects — for squint she did, and shrivelled, alas ! she was — increased almost to frenzy the ire of the incensed damsel. “ Say that again,” retorted she, “ and I’ll wring your head off !”

“ Tabitha, you’re an old fright !” repeated the bird ; “ a sour, cross-grained, shrivelled old fright, Tabitha !” said Vert-vert, swinging and nodding, and swaying his neck from side to side ; “ Look in the glass, Tabitha !”

And Tabitha was approaching the cage with dire intent, and Vert-vert might have rued his boldness, had not Miss Blackall from the drawing-room, and Pompey from the hall, rushed to the scene of contest, and rescued their favourite from the furious waiting-woman.

Too much irritated to be prudent, she at once gave her lady the choice of parting with herself or the parrot ; and as there was no sort of comparison between the two in Miss Blackall’s opinion, her warning was accepted and off she went — all the sooner because, during the short time she did stay in the house, her triumphant enemy continued to ejaculate, alternately, “ Look in the glass, Tabitha !” and “ Ugly, cross-grained, squinting old fright !”

How the bird came by these phrases was a mystery, — unless, indeed, Mrs. Colby, who wished the duenna away that she might succeed her in the management of her lady, might have had some hand in the business. Certain it was, that any sentence sharply and pungently articulated was pretty sure to be caught up by this accomplished speaker, and that his poor inoffensive mistress had several times got into scrapes by his reporting certain disagreeable little things which happened to be said in his presence to the parties concerned. Vert-vert was the greatest scandal-monger in Belford ; and everybody, except the persons aggrieved, cherished him accordingly.

From this time forth Mrs. Colby became a sort of guardianship to Miss Blackall. She slept, indeed, at her own lodgings, but she lived almost constantly with her friend ; used her house, her carriage, her servants, her table ; protected her from mercenary suitors, and seemed to have entirely relinquished in her favour her own matrimonial designs — the more readily, perhaps, as her attempts in that line had been so singularly unfortunate.

Thus passed several years. At the time, however, of the meditated country excursion, Mrs. Colby had just admitted into her ever-teeming brain another well-laid scheme for changing her condition ; and the choice of the Warren House, at which the other ladies grumbled so much, was made, not for the gratification of her servant, whose family kept the house, but for the furtherance of her own plans, which were as yet wholly unsuspected in Belford.

Dr. Fenwick loved the stewed carp of the Warren House, and to propitiate Dr. Fenwick was at present the great object of Mrs. Colby, although he was about the last person whom she would ever have intended to honour with her hand, being almost as poor as herself, and with no very great prospect of ever being richer.

The doctor was a burly, pompous personage, with large features, a stout figure, a big voice, a slow oracular mode of conversation, and a considerable portion of self-importance. What he could have been like when young, one can hardly imagine ; nor was it very easy to guess at his present age, for ever since he first came to Belford, a dozen years before, he had seemed exactly the same heavy, parading, consequential Doctor Fenwick, with a buzz-wig and a shovel-hat, that he was at the moment of which we write. And yet this Strephon had been in his time as great a fortune-hunter as Mrs. Colby herself, and was said to have made in one week four offers, three of them being to Lady Dixon and the two Misses Morris. The swain was, however, soon discouraged, and for many years appeared to have given up any design of making his fortune by matrimony as completely as Mrs. Colby herself.

For the rest, he was a good-natured man, with more sense than any one, judging from his egregious vanity, would have supposed. His course through life had been, although quite free from moral imputation, yet sufficiently out of the common track to hinder his professional advancement ; since he had been originally an apothecary, then an army surgeon, then a physician with a Scotch diploma, and then, finding medicine unprofitable, he contrived through some channel of interest to get ordained, and now lived partly on his half-pay as army surgeon, and partly by officiating as an occasional preacher in the different parishes round about ; for in the pulpit, although somewhat coarse, he was forcible and not ineloquent, and

there was a kindness and a simplicity about the man, in the midst of his pomposity, his vanity, and his epicurean tastes, which, together with his thorough inoffensiveness and his blameless character, ensured him considerable attention from the leading persons in the town. He had many old friends also of a respectable class in society, at whose houses he frequently made long visits; and one of these, a gentleman of the name of Musgrave, descended like the doctor from an old family in the North, was at this very time his visiter in Belford, and the object of Mrs. Colby's secret hopes.

Mr. Musgrave was really a delightful person; shrewd, acute, lively, rich, and not at all too young or too handsome to make the union preposterous on the score of appearance. Since his arrival, too, the gentlemen had been assiduous in their visits and attentions; they had dined at Miss Blackall's, in company with Mr. Singleton, the day before the excursion, and Vert-vert, aided it was to be presumed by a little prompting, had vociferated on their names being announced, — "He's a fine preacher, Doctor Fenwick! Mr. Musgrave's a charming man!" — at which Mrs. Colby had blushed and cried "Fie!" and the doctor had chuckled, and the simple hostess had laughed, and Mr. Musgrave had given his friend a glance of much meaning; symptoms which were renewed more than once in the course of the evening, as the parrot, according to his general habit, was so pleased with his new phrase that he repeated it over and over again, until, fearing that even good, unsuspecting Mr. Singleton might take more notice than she wished, Mrs. Colby threw a green cloth over the cage, and the bird, after wishing the company "Good night!" composed himself to rest.

The next day was as fine as ever blessed an English party in chase of pleasure, and the company set forth in three carriages: Lady Dixon and Mr. Singleton in the Miss Morris's coach; Mrs. Colby, with Miss Blackall, in her chariot; and Dr. Fenwick and Mr. Musgrave in a well-appointed curricule (the fashionable equipage of the day), belonging to the latter. Vert-vert and Miss Bates were left behind.

Arrived at the place of destination, the first business of this rural party was to discuss the stewed carp, the roast lamb, the ducks and green peas, and strawberries and cream, provided for their refreshment; their second was to enjoy, after their

several ways, the beautiful scenery amongst which they found themselves. Mr. Singleton, Lady Dixon, and the Misses Morris preferred the mode of sitting down to a rubber in the close room in which they had dined; the other four sallied forth into the air, Mrs. Colby taking Mr. Musgrave's arm, and Miss Blackall leaning on the doctor.

The more alert and active pair soon outstripped their heavier companions, and led the way across a narrow strip of broken common, with old pollards scattered here and there, into a noble tract of woodland scenery, majestic oaks and elms and beeches rising from thickets of the weeping birch, the hornbeam, the hawthorn, and the holly, variegated with the briar rose and the wild honeysuckle, bordered with fern and foxglove, and terminated by a magnificent piece of water, almost a lake, whose picturesque shores, indented by lawny bays and wooded headlands, were as calm and tranquil as if the foot of man had never invaded their delicious solitude. Except the song of the wood-pigeon, the squirrel leaping from bough to bough overhead, and the shy rabbit darting across the path, the silence was unbroken; and Mr. Musgrave and Mrs. Colby, who had the tact to praise, if not the taste to admire, the loveliness of the scene, found a seat on the fantastic roots of a great beech, and talked of the beauties of nature until summoned by the care of good Mr. Singleton to partake of a syllabub under the cow, with which the ruralities of the day were to conclude.

On their return home, a slight difference was proposed by Mr. Musgrave in their travelling arrangements: Mrs. Colby accompanied him in his curricule, and Dr. Fenwick took her place in Miss Blackall's carriage. The prospect seemed most promising: — but, alas for the vanity of human expectations! Mr. Musgrave did not propose to Mrs. Colby; and Dr. Fenwick, encouraged by Vert-vert's hint, did propose to Miss Blackall, — and was accepted on the spot, and married within the month; and poor Mrs. Colby was fain to smother her disappointment, and smile through the bridal festivities, and teach Vert-vert to drink to the new-married couple, and draw bride-cake through the wedding-ring.

THE YOUNG SCULPTOR.

FOR some time after the dreadful catastrophe of the poor Abbé, the Friary Cottage was deserted by all except Mrs. Duval and poor Louis. The vulgar appetite for the horrible, in all its ghastly and disgusting detail, had not been so fully awakened then as it has been since by repeated exhibitions of murder in melo-dramas on the stage, and even in penny and twopenny shows at fairs and revels — or by the still more exciting particulars (with woodcuts to illustrate the letter-press) in the Sunday papers: Belford was too far from London to attract the hordes of inquisitive strangers, who flocked from the metropolis to Elstree, to contemplate the lane where Thurtell slew his victim, or the house where the dreadful scene was planned; and, to do the inhabitants of our town justice, the popular feeling both there and in the neighbourhood was one comprising too much of genuine pity for the good old man, so inoffensive, so kind, and so defenceless — too much indignation against his murderer, and too sincere a sympathy with his avengers (for as such Louis and Bijou were considered), to admit of the base alloy of vulgar curiosity. Everybody would have been glad, to be sure, to make acquaintance with the boy and the dog who had cut so distinguished a figure in the justice-room, — to know, and, if possible, to serve them; but there was a sort of respect — young lad and pastry-cook's son though he were — which forbade an intrusion on a grief so deep and so recent; so that the gentry contented themselves with raising a handsome subscription for the boy, and patronising his mother in the way of her trade; whilst the common people, satisfied their feeling of justice by attending the execution of Wilson, and purchasing and commenting on the “last dying speech and confession,” which was written and printed, and distributed for sale by some ingenious speculator in such commodities the night before it purported to be spoken, and some copies actually vended in the country villages, owing to a mistake of the time of execution, some hours before the criminal was brought out upon the scaffold. Having so

assuaged their indignation, the excitement gradually subsided, and the murder of the poor priest sank into oblivion, like other tales of horror, a mere nine days' wonder! One impression only seemed permanent: a shuddering aversion to pass at night, or even by day, the picturesque ruins amongst which he had dwelt, and in the consecrated grounds belonging to which his remains, in pursuance of a wish which he had expressed only a few weeks before the fatal night, had been interred. The persons who avoided the spot would have been puzzled to tell why, for it had been a favourite rendezvous with the inhabitants of Belford — a walk for the grown-up, a play-ground for the children; why they shunned it they could hardly have told, unless they had answered, in the words of the great poet, that

“Something ail'd it now — the place was cursed.”

Mrs. Duval fretted over this desertion; not so much from any decline in her business, for from the large orders of the neighbouring gentry she had as much as she could well manage; but because her cheerful and social disposition felt the loneliness oppressive. It almost seemed, she said, as if the folk ran away from her; besides, she thought it too melancholy (*unked* was her word — and a most expressive word it is, combining loneliness, melancholy, dreariness, and vacuity — a more intense and positive feeling of mental weariness than *ennui*), she thought it too unked for a boy of Louis' age, and wished to take advantage of her improved circumstances, and remove into the interior of the town, where her son would be near an excellent day-school, at which she proposed to place him, and would be in the way of cheerful society in an evening. But Louis, with an obstinacy very unlike his general character, positively refused to leave the Friary Cottage. The violence of his grief had of course abated after the detection and the execution of the murderer, and more particularly after he had ascertained, not merely from Wilson's confession, but from the corroborating testimony of Miss Smith's maid, that her carelessly mentioning in a shop to which she was sent to get change for a five-pound note, that her mistress wanted gold to make up the amount of some money, which she was going to pay to the old French master, had been overheard by this ruffian, who was himself in the shop making some small

purchase, and had been the actual cause of the murder. This discovery was an indescribable relief to Louis, who had been haunted by the fear that his own dear mother's unguarded expressions of terror at M. l'Abbé's intended return at night, and with a charge of money, after her repeated cautions and her dream, which story she had related at full length to every creature whom she had seen during the day, had in some way or other been the occasion of this horrible catastrophe. To be so fully assured that her indiscretion had not produced this tremendous result, proved an unspeakable comfort to the thoughtful and sensitive boy ; but still his grief, although it had changed its violent and tumultuous character, and seemed fast settling into a fixed though gentle melancholy, appeared rather to increase than diminish. He shrank from society of all kinds, especially the company of children, and evidently suffered so much both in mind and body when forced from his beloved solitude, that his fond mother, fearful of risking the health, if not the life, of this precious and only child, at length desisted from the struggle, and left him to pursue his own inclinations in peace, much to the annoyance of Stephen Lane, who, having taken a great fancy to the boy, from the part he had acted in the discovery of the poor Abbé's body, and the detection of the murderer, had resolved to be his friend through life, and wished to begin his kindness at that very *now*, by putting him to school, or binding him apprentice, and gave the preference to the latter mode of proceeding.

“ Talk of his delicacy ! ” exclaimed the good butcher to poor Mrs. Duval, in a loud earnest tone, which, kind as his meaning was, and good-humoured as was the speaker, did certainly sound a little like the voice of a man in a passion. “ His delicacy, forsooth ! Won't your coddling make him more delicate ? Delicacy ! Nobody ever talked of such nonsense when I was a youngster. Why, before I was his age, I was head-boy with old Jackson, my wife's father that now is — used to be up between three and four of a morning, and down to the yard to help the men slaughter the beasts ; then back again to the Butts, to open the windows and sweep the shop ; then help cut out ; then carry home the town orders. — I should like to see Louis with such a tray of meat upon his head as I used to trot about with and think nothing of it ! ”

— then carry out the country orders, galloping with my tray before me like mad, ay, half over the county at a sweep ; then drive the cart to fetch home the calves ; then see to the horses ; then feed the beasts ; then shut up shop ; then take a scamper through the streets for my own diversion ; go to bed as fresh as a four-year-old, and sleep like a top. There's a day's work for you ! Just send Louis down to the Butts, and I'll make a man of him ; take him 'prentice for nothing, feed and clothe and lodge him, and mayhap, by and bye, give him a share of the business. Only send him to me."

"But, Mr. Lane," interposed Mrs. Duval, "poor Louis does not like butchering ; he has not the heart to kill a worm, and would never do in that line of business, I'm sure."

"More fool he !" ejaculated Stephen. "Heart, indeed ! As if butchers were harder-hearted than other folk ! I'll tell you what, Mrs. Duval, no good will come to the boy whilst you let him sit moping all day with a book in his hand amongst those ruins. Move yourself off ! Get into the middle of the town, and wean him from that dismal place altogether. Delicate, quotha ! Well he may, such a life as he leads there, sitting upon the poor old man's grave along with the little dog, just like two figures on a tombstone. As to the poor brute, I don't blame him, because 'tis his instinct, poor dumb thing, and he can't help it ; but Louis can — or you can for him, if you will. Dang it !" continued the honest butcher, warming as he pursued his harangue ; "dang it ! you women folk are all alike, young and old. There is my daughter Bessy — I caught her this very morning coaxing young Master Stephen to let the maid wash him, and my young gentleman squalled, and kicked, and roared, and would have coaxed and scolded, if he could but ha' spoke ; and mother, and grandmother, and nurse, were all going to put off the washing till another time, for fear of throwing the urchin into fits, he being delicate, forsooth ! when I came in and settled the matter, by whipping up young master, and flinging him into the water-tub in the yard before you could say 'Jack Robinson ;' and Dr. Thompson says I was right, and that my sousing will do the boy more good than all their coddling with warm water. So the young gentleman is to be ducked every morning, and the doctor says that in a month he'll have cheeks like a rose. Now this is what you should do with Louis."

“What! duck him?” inquired Mrs. Duval, smiling.

“No, woman!” replied Stephen, waxing wroth, “but get away from this dreary place, and fling him amongst other boys. Put him to school for a year or two, if he is such a fool as not to like the butchering line; I’ll pay the expense, and we’ll see what else we can do with him when he’s of a proper age. Only leave that old Friary. No good can come to either of you whilst you stay there.”

“Well, and I wish to leave the ruins, I assure you, Mr. Lane, and I cannot thank you enough for your kindness towards Louis,” returned the affectionate mother; “but the poor boy falls sick if he’s taken away for a day; and then sometimes I think he may be right, on account of my dream.”

“Your dream!” exclaimed Stephen. “Is the woman mad?”

“Did you never hear,” resumed Mrs. Duval, taking no notice of this civil ejaculation, “that I dreamt of Louis’ finding a pot of gold in the ruins? and you know how true my dream about the wolves falling upon the poor Abbé turned out — so that I sometimes think ——”

“The woman’s crazy!” interrupted Mr. Lane, sailing off; for this discussion had taken place at the small gate leading up to the cottage; — “she’s madder than a March hare! one might as well attempt to drive a herd of wild bulls along the turnpike road, as to bring her round to common sense; so she may manage matters her own way, for I’ve done with her:” and off marched Stephen Lane.

His description of Louis and Bijou was not much unlike the truth. The faithful dog, with the remarkable instinct which characterises his race, lay for hours and hours on the simple flag-stone marked only with his name and the date of his death (that of his birth being unknown) which covered the remains of his old master. And, reclining beside him on the same stone, sat his equally faithful companion, sometimes reading one of the good Abbé’s books; which, unclaimed by any relation, and no will having been found, had been consigned by the local authorities to the care of Mrs. Duval; sometimes pursuing, with irregular but successful ardour, the studies marked out for him by his venerable instructor; and often sketching designs for a monument, which it was the object of his affectionate day-dreams to erect to his memory. Gradu-

ally, however, his designs extended to other objects. Louis' talent for drawing was remarkable; and as he had inherited a little of his mother's superstition — and encouraged, it may be, in the present instance, by the verification of the bad dream, had formed his own version of the good — the pencil soon became his principal occupation. If Stephen Lane had heard to the end the story of dreaming of a pot of gold, and finding an old paint-pot, and had happened to have had any faith in the legend, he would have construed it differently, and have bound Louis upon the spot either to a glazier and house-painter, or to an oil and colourman: but the boy, as I said before, put his private interpretation on the vision, and as prophecies sometimes work their own accomplishment, so did it bid fair to prove in this case, since by repeated and assiduous and careful copying of the romantic buildings and the fine natural scenery about him, he was laying the foundation of an artist's education, by at once acquiring facility and certainty of drawing, and a taste for the beautiful and the picturesque. Thus occupied, and with the finest books in French literature — and Louis read French like English, and some of the easier classics to occupy him — he never had dared to open the Horace, which seemed like a sacred legacy, — days and weeks passed on, and, with no apparent change in the habits, a silent amelioration was taking place in the mind of the pensive boy, on whom time was working its usual healing effect, taking the sting from grief and the bitterness from memory (“the strong hours conquer us” — why should we resist them?) when a circumstance occurred, which tended more than any thing could have done to divert his attention and soothe his sorrow. A new lodger offered himself at the Friary Cottage, and of all the lodgers that could have been devised, one the most congenial to his disposition, and the most calculated to foster and encourage his predominant pursuit.

He was sitting among the ruins as usual, one fine morning early in May, attempting for the twentieth time to imitate on paper the picturesque forms, and the contrasted yet harmonious colouring of a broken arch garlanded with ivy, whose dark shining wreaths had straggled from the old stone-work to a tall pear-tree in full blossom that overhung it, breaking with its pale green leaves and its ivory blossoms the deep blue of the almost cloudless sky, — when his mother called him to a

young gentleman, who wished, she said, to sketch the great window, and who, after sufficient conversation with her to prove his good breeding and good feeling, sat down to the task which had so often taxed the poor boy's simple skill. The stranger brought to it talent, practice, taste. The work grew under his hand, and in two hours, which seemed but two minutes to Louis, to whom he had been talking most kindly during the greater part of the time, he produced a drawing, free, vigorous, and masterly beyond any that his youthful admirer had ever beheld.

"You must be a great artist!" exclaimed the boy involuntarily, returning the sketch after a long examination, his eyes sparkling and his cheeks glowing with generous fervour; "for, as young as you look, you must be some great painter."

"Not a painter certainly, nor a great artist of any kind," replied the stranger, smiling. "I am a young sculptor, or rather a student of sculpture, driven by medical advice into the country, and in search of some cheap, quiet, airy lodging;—if your apartments are vacant, and your mother would venture to take into her house an unknown youth—" And in five minutes the affair was settled, and Henry Warner established as an inhabitant of the Friary Cottage.

To a boy like Louis the companionship of such a person as Henry Warner—for in spite of the differences of station, age, and acquirement, companions they speedily became—proved not only an almost immediate cure for his melancholy, but an excellent although unconscious education.

The young sculptor was that rare thing, a man of genius, and of genius refined and heightened by cultivation. His father had been a clerk in a public office, and having only one other child, an elder daughter comfortably married in her own rank of life, he devoted all that could be spared of his own income to the improvement of his promising boy, sending him first to a public school, then to the Royal Academy, and from thence to Italy; but even at the moment that he was rejoicing over a printed letter dated Rome in an English newspaper, which mentioned Henry Warner as likely to become a second Canova, apoplexy, caused perhaps by the very excess of pleasurable excitement, seized him with that one fatal, and, therefore merciful grasp, with which that tremendous disease sometimes sweeps away the hardest and the strongest. He died,

leaving his beloved son to struggle with the penury which he was by nature and by temperament peculiarly unfitted either to endure or to surmount.

On his return to England, Henry found himself alone in the world. His mother had long been dead; and his sister, a well-meaning but vulgar-minded person, differing from him in appearance, intellect, and character — as we so often see, yet always with something like surprise, in children of the same parents — and married to a man still coarser than herself, had no thought or feeling in common with him, could not comprehend his hopes, and was more than half tempted to class his habits of patient observation, of strenuous thought, and of silent study, under the one sweeping name of idleness. She could not understand the repetition of effort and of failure which so often leads to the highest excellence; and, disappointed in the sympathy of his only relation — the sympathy which above all others would have soothed him, our young artist, after collecting the small remains of his father's property, withdrew from a house where he suspected himself to be no longer welcome, and plunged at once into the mighty sea of London.

His first outset was unexpectedly prosperous. A nobleman of acknowledged taste, whom he had met at Rome, not only purchased a bust of the Grecian Helen, in which he found or fancied a resemblance to his youngest and favourite child, but engaged him to accompany his family to their country seat, and execute a group of his two daughters, then on the point of marriage.

The group was most successfully begun — one figure quite finished, and the other nearly so, and the nuptials of the elder sister were celebrated with all due splendour, and adorned by the varied talents of the accomplished sculptor, who united strong musical taste to a slight turn for lyrical poetry, and poured forth his united gifts with unbounded prodigality on this happy occasion. But, a few days before that fixed for the marriage of the young and lovely Lady Isabel, the artist, whose manner had latterly assumed a reckless gaiety little in accordance with his gentle and modest character, suddenly quitted the Hall, leaving behind him the fine work of art, now so near its completion, and a letter to the Earl, which excited strange and mingled feelings in the breast of his noble patron.

“Wayward, presumptuous, yet honourable boy!” was his internal exclamation, as the open and artless questions of the unconscious Isabel, who wondered with a pretty and almost childish innocence why a person whom she liked so much should leave her figure unfinished and run away from her wedding, convinced the anxious father that the happiness of his favourite child was still uninjured. The nuptials were solemnised; the noble family returned to Italy; and Henry Warner, retiring to his London lodgings, strove to bury thought and recollection in an entire and absorbing devotion to his great and noble art.

From this point, his history was but a series of misfortunes — of trembling hopes, of bitter disappointments, of consuming anxiety, and final despair. Every one knows the difficulty with which excellence in art bursts, often as it seems by some casual accident, through the darkness of obscurity and the crowd of competition. Doubtless many a one has felt, as Henry Warner felt, the aching, burning consciousness of unrecognised genius — the agonising aspiration after the fame, always within view, yet always eluding his pursuit. Mr. Moore, in one of the finest songs that even he ever wrote, has depicted a glittering vessel, laden with fairy treasures, sailing lightly over a summer sea, followed by a little boat, rowed by one single mariner, closely chasing yet never overtaking the phantom bark. The sun rises and the sun sets, and still sees the magic ship floating onward, and the solitary boatman labouring after at one unvaried distance, ever near but never nearer — wearing away life and strength for an illusion that mocks whilst it allures. That lonely mariner might be the type of many an artist of high but unacknowledged talent, more especially of many a young sculptor, since in that pure and lofty branch of art there is no room for second-rate merit, no middle path between hopeless obscurity and splendid reputation.

To attain to this proud eminence was not the destiny of Henry Warner. With funds almost exhausted, a broken constitution, and a half-broken heart, he left the great city — so dreary and so desolate to those who live alone, uncheered by bosom sympathy, unsoothed by home affection — and retired to Belford, as his medical adviser said, to recruit his health — as his own desponding spirit whispered, to die!

At the Friary Cottage he found unexpected comfort. The quiet was delightful to him ; the situation, at once melancholy and picturesque, fell in with his taste and his feelings ; and with the cheerful kindness of Mrs. Duval and the ardent admiration of her enthusiastic boy it was impossible not to be gratified.

Henry was himself one of those gifted persons who seem born to command affection. The griefs that were festering at the core, never appeared upon the surface. There all was gentle, placid, smiling, almost gay ; and the quickness with which he felt, and the sweetness with which he acknowledged, any trifling attention, would have won colder hearts than those of Louis and his mother. The tender charm of his smile and the sunny look of his dark eyes were singularly pleasing, and, without being regularly handsome, his whole countenance had a charm more captivating than beauty. Sweetness and youthfulness formed its prevailing expression, as grace was the characteristic of his slight and almost boyish figure ; although a phrenologist would have traced much both of loftiness and power in the Shakspearian pile of forehead and the finely-moulded head.

His conversation was gentle and unpretending, and occasionally, when betrayed into speaking on his own art, fervent and enthusiastic. But he talked little, as one who had lived much alone, preferring to turn over the French and Latin books of which the poor Abbé's small library consisted, or buried in Hayley's "Essay on Sculpture," a chance-found volume, of which not merely the subject, but the feelings under which the poem was written, particularly interested him* ; or forming plans for new works, which, under the temporary revival caused by change of scene and of air, he in

* The Letters on Sculpture were addressed to Flaxman, whose pupil, Thomas Hayley, the poet's only son, was during the time of their composition rapidly declining of a lingering and painful disease. He did actually die between the completion and the publication of the poem ; and the true and strong expression of the father's grief for the sufferings and death of this amiable and promising youth, is to me singularly affecting. It is very old-fashioned to like the writings of Hayley, who paid in the latter part of his career the usual penalty for having been over-praised in his earlier days, and is now seldom mentioned but as an object of ridicule and scorn ; but, set aside the great and varied learning of his notes, I cannot help feeling some kindness for the accomplished and elegant scholar who in his greater works, the Essays on History, on Epic Poetry, on Painting, and on Sculpture, has communicated, so agreeably, so rich a store of information, and whose own observations are always so just, so candid, so honourable—so full of a tempered love of liberty, and of the highest and purest admiration for all that is great and beautiful in literature or in art.

his happier moments began to think it possible that he might live to complete.

His great pleasure, however, was in rambling with Louis through the lanes and meadows, now in the very prime and pride of May, green and flowery to the eye, cool and elastic to the tread, fresh and fragrant to the scent, pleasant to every sense ; or in being rowed by him in a little boat (and Louis was a skilful and indefatigable waterman) amongst the remotest recesses of the great river ; between beech-woods with the sun-beams wandering with such an interchange of light and shadow over the unspeakable beauty of their fresh young tops ; — or through narrow channels hemmed in by turfy hills and bowery islets, beautiful solitudes from which the world and the world's woe seemed excluded, and they and their little boat sole tenants of the bright water, into whose bosom the blue sky shone so peacefully, and whose slow current half seemed to bear along the slender boughs of the weeping willow as they stooped to kiss the stream.

In such a scene as this, Henry's soothed spirit would sometimes burst into song — such song as Louis fondly thought no one had ever heard before. It was in truth a style of singing as rare as it was exquisite, in which effect was completely sacrificed to expression, and the melody, however beautiful, seemed merely an adjunct to the most perfect and delicious recitation. Perhaps none but the writer of the words (and yet, considered as poetry, the words were trifling enough) could have afforded to make that round and mellow voice, and that consummate knowledge of music, that extraordinary union of taste and execution, so entirely secondary to the feeling of the verse.

One great charm of Henry's singing was its spontaneity — the manner in which, excited by the merest trifle, it gushed forth in the middle of conversation, or broke out after a long silence. “How sweetly that skylark sings !” cried Louis one morning, laying aside his oar that he might listen at his ease — “and the deep soothing cooing of the wood-pigeon, and the sighing of the wind, and the rippling of the waters ! How delightful are all natural sounds !”

“Ay,” rejoined Henry —

“There is a pure and holy spell
In all sweet sounds on earth that dwell :
The pleasant hum of the early bee,
As she plies her cheerful industry ;

The whir of the mail'd beetle's wing,
Sailing heavily by at evening ;
And the nightingale, so poets say,
Wooing the rose in his matchless lay.

There is a pure and holy spell
In all sweet sounds on earth that dwell
The Indian shell, whose faithful strain
Echoes the song of the distant main ;
The streamlet gurgling through the trees,
The welcome sigh of the cool night breeze ;
The cataract loud, the tempest high,
Hath each its thrilling melody."

"Yes," continued Louis, after warmly thanking the singer
— for though the matter was little, the manner was much —

"Yes ! and how much beauty there is in almost every scene,
if people had but the faculty, not of looking for it—that were
too much to expect — but of seeing it when it lies before
them. Look at the corner of that meadow as it comes sloping
down to the water, with the cattle clustered under the great
oak, and that little thicket of flowery hawthorn and shining
holly, and golden-blossomed broom, with the tangled sheep-
walk threading it, and forming a bower fit for any princess."

Again Henry answered in song —

"She lay beneath the forest shade
As midst its leaves a lily fair —
Sleeping she lay, young Kalasrade,
Nor dreamt that mortal hover'd there.
All as she slept, a sudden smile
Play'd round her lips in dimpling grace,
And softest blushes glanced the while
In roseate beauty o'er her face ;
And then those blushes pass'd away
From her pure cheek, and Kalasrade
Pale as a new-blown lily lay,
Slumbering beneath the forest shade.

Oh ! lovely was that blush so meek,
That smile half playful, half demure,
And lovelier still that pallid cheek —
That look so gentle yet so pure.
I left her in her purity,
Slumbering beneath the forest glade ;
I fear'd to meet her waking eye,
The young, the timid Kalasrade.
I left her ; yet by day, by night,
Dwells in my soul that image fair,
Madd'ning as thoughts of past delight,
As guilty hope, as fierce despair."

"Is that subject quite imaginary ?" Louis at last ventured
to inquire, taking care, however, from an instinctive delicacy
that he would have found it difficult to account for, to resume
his oar and turn away from Henry as he spoke — "or did

you ever really see a sleeping beauty in a bower, such as I was fancying just now?"

"It is and it is not imaginary, Louis," replied Henry, sighing deeply; "or rather, it is a fancy piece, grounded, as rhymes and pictures often are, on some slight foundation of truth. Wandering in the neighbourhood of Rome, I strayed accidentally into the private grounds of an English nobleman, and saw a beautiful girl sleeping as I have described under a bay-tree, in the terraced Italian garden. I withdrew as silently as possible, the more so as I saw another young lady, her sister, approaching, who, in endeavouring to dispose a branch of the bay-tree, so as to shelter the fair sleeper from the sun, awakened her."

"What a subject for a group!" exclaimed Louis. "Did you never attempt to model the two sisters?"

"It is a fine subject," replied Henry; "and it has been attempted, but not completed. Do you not remember singling out a sketch of the recumbent figure, the other day, when you were turning over my drawings?"

"Yes, and saying how like it was to the exquisite bust marked 'EAENH. — Helena! But all your female figures are more or less like that Helen. She is your goddess of beauty."

"Perhaps so," rejoined Henry. "But where are we now? Is this the old church of Castlebar which you were promising to show me, with its beautiful tower, and the great yew-trees? Yes, it must be. You are right in your admiration, Louis. That tower is beautiful, with its fine old masonry, the quaint fantastic brickwork left, to the honour of the rector's taste, in the rich tinting of its own weather stains, undaubed by white-wash, and contrasting so gracefully with the vivid foliage of that row of tall limes behind. A strange tree for a churchyard, Louis, the honeyed, tasseled lime! And yet how often we see it there blending with the dark funereal yew — like life with death! I should like to be buried in that spot."

"Nay," said Louis, "a churchyard is sometimes devoted to gayer purposes than burials. Hark! even now!" and as he spoke the bells struck up a merry peal, the church-door opened, and the little procession of a rustic wedding, — the benign clergyman looking good wishes, the smirking clerk, the hearty jolly bridal-father, the simpering bride-maidens, the laughing bridesmen — and the pretty, blushing, modest

bride, listening with tearful smiles to the fond and happy lover-husband, on whose arm she hung — issued from the porch. “I should like just such a wife as that myself,” added Louis, talking of marrying as a clever boy of thirteen likes to talk *; “should not you?”

But Henry made no answer — he was musing on another wedding; and after a silence of some duration, in the course of which they had rowed away almost out of hearing of the joyous peal that still echoed merrily from the church tower, he broke again forth into song —

Nipp'd where the leaflets sprout anew,
 “Forth the lovely bride ye bring :
 Gayest flowers before her fling,
 From your high-piled baskets spread,
 Maidens of the fairy tread !
 Strew them far and wide, and high,
 A rosy shower 'twixt earth and sky,
 — Strew about ! strew about !
 Larkspur trim, and poppy dyed,
 And freak'd carnation's bursting pride,
 Strew about ! strew about !
 Dark-eyed pinks, with fringes light,
 Rich geraniums, clustering bright,
 Strew about ! strew about !
 Flaunting pea, and harebell blue,
 And damask-rose, of deepest hue,
 And purest lilies, Maidens, strew !
 Strew about ! strew about !

Home the lovely bride ye bring,
 Choicest flowers before her fling
 Till dizzying steams of rich perfume
 Fill the lofty banquet room !
 Strew the tender citron there,
 The crush'd magnolia proud and rare,
 Strew about ! strew about !
 Orange blossoms newly dropp'd,
 Chains from high acacia cropp'd
 Strew about ! strew about !
 Pale musk-rose, so light and fine
 Cloves and stars of jessamine,
 Strew about ! strew about !
 Tops of myrtle, wet with dew,
 Nipp'd where the leaflets sprout anew.
 Fragrant bay leaves, Maidens, strew,
 Strew about ! strew about !”

Louis was about to utter some expression of admiration, which the ringing air, and the exquisite taste and lightness of

* It was somewhere about that ripe age that a very clever friend of mine, travelling in the North with a young clergyman, his private tutor, wrote to his mother a letter beginning as follows : —

“Gretna Green, Thursday.

“My dear Mother, — Here we are, in the very land of love and matrimony ; and it is a thousand pities that my little wife is not here with us, for Mr. G. being at hand, we could strike up a wedding without loss of time, and my father and Mr. D. would have nothing to do but to settle the income and the dowry at their leisure.” So lightly are those matters considered at thirteen ! At three-and-thirty the case is altered.

the singing, well deserved, when he perceived that the artist, absorbed in his own feelings and recollections, was totally unconscious of his presence. Under the influence of such associations, he sang, with a short pause between them, the two following airs : —

“ They bid me strike the harp once more,
My gayest song they bid me pour,
In pealing notes of minstrel pride
They bid me hail Sir Hubert's bride.
Alas ! alas ! the nuptial strain
Faltering I try and try in vain ;
'Twas pleasant once to wake its spell —
But not for Lady Isabel.

They bid me vaunt in lordly lay
Sir Hubert's mien and spirit gay,
His wide demesnes and lineage high,
And all the pride of chivalry.
Alas ! alas ! the knightly lay
In trembling murmurs dies away ;
'Twere sweet the warrior's fame to tell —
But not to Lady Isabel.

They bid me blend in tenderest song
The lover's fears, unutter'd long,
With the bold bridegroom's rapturous glee,
And vows of endless constancy.
Alas ! alas ! my voice no more
Can tale of happy passion pour ;
To love, to joy, a long farewell ! —
Yet blessings on thee, Isabel ! ”

“ Bless thee ! I may no longer stay ! ”
No longer bid thee think on me ;
I cannot 'bide thy bridal day —
But, Helen, I go blessing thee.

Bless thee ! no vow of thine is broke ;
I ask'd not thy dear love for me ;
Though tears, and sighs, and blushes spoke —
Yet, Helen, I go blessing thee.

Bless thee ! yet do not quite forget ;
Oh, sometimes, sometimes, pity me !
My sun of life is early set —
But, Helen, I die blessing thee.”

And then the minstrel sank into a silence too sad and too profound for Louis to venture to interrupt, and the lady — for Kalasrade, Isabel, and Helena (‘EΛENH), was clearly one — the Helen of the lover's thought was never again mentioned between them.

His spirits, however, continued to amend, although his health was fluctuating ; and having at length fixed on the Procession in honour of Pan, from Keats's “ Endymion,” as

the subject of a great work in basso-relievo, and having contrived, with Louis's assistance, to fit up a shed in the most retired part of the ruins, as a sort of out-of-door studio, he fell to work with the clay and the modelling tools with an ardour and intensity partaking, perhaps, equally of the strength of youth and the fever of disease, of hope, and of despair.

These mixed feelings were in nothing more evinced than in the choice of his subject; for eminently suited as the passage in question* undoubtedly was to his own classical taste and graceful execution, it is certain that he was attracted to the author, not merely by his unequal and fitful genius, his extraordinary pictorial and plastic power, but by a sympathy, an instinctive sympathy, with his destiny. Keats had died young, and with his talent unacknowledged, — and so he felt should he.

In the mean while he laboured strenuously at the Endymion, relinquishing his excursions on the water, and confining his walks to an evening ramble on Sunham Common, pleased to watch Bijou (who had transferred to our artist much of the allegiance which he had formerly paid to his old master, and even preferred him to Louis) frisking among the gorse, or gambolling along the shores of the deep irregular pools which, mingled with islets of cottages and cottage-gardens, form so picturesque a foreground to the rich landscapes beyond.

Better still did he love to seek the deep solitude of the double avenue of old oaks that skirted the upper part of the common; and there —

“ Like hermit near his cross of stone
To pace at eve the silent turf alone,
And softly breathe or inly muse a prayer.”

Rhymed Plea for Tolerance.†

More fitting place for such meditation he could hardly have found than that broad avenue of columned trunks, the boughs arching over his head, a natural temple! the shadows falling

* Vide note 1, at the end of the paper. †

† A poem of which (if it were not presumptuous in me to praise such a work) I should say, that it united the pregnant sense and the beautiful versification of Pope, the eloquent philosophy of Wordsworth, the wide humanity of Scott, and the fervent holiness of Cowper, with a spirit of charity all its own. That little volume is a just proof (if such were needed) how entirely intellect of the very highest class belongs to virtue. The work is out of print: must it continue so? Is it quite consistent in one imbued with so sincere a love for his fellow-creatures to withhold from them such an overflowing source of profit and delight?

heavily as between the pillared aisles of some dim cathedral, and the sunbeams just glinting through the massive foliage, as if piercing the Gothic tracery of some pictured window. The wind came sweeping along the branches, with a sound at once solemn and soothing ; and to a mind high-wrought and fancy-fraught as Henry's, the very song of the birds as they sought their nests in the high trees had something pure and holy as a vesper-hymn.

The sweetest hour in all the day to Henry Warner was that of his solitary walk in the avenue. Quite solitary it was always ; for Louis had discovered that this was the only pleasure which his friend wished to enjoy unshared, and with instinctive delicacy contrived to keep away at that hour.

The only person who ever accosted Henry on these occasions was our good friend Stephen Lane, who used sometimes to meet him when returning from his farm, and who, won, first by his countenance, and then by his manner, and a little, perhaps, by the close but often unsuspected approximation which exists between the perfectly simple and the highly refined, had taken what he called a fancy to the lad, and even forgave him for prognosticating that Louis would some day or other be a painter of no common order, — that he had the feeling of beauty and the eye for colour, the inborn taste and the strong love of art which indicate genius. “ So much the worse ! ” thought our friend Stephen ; but such was the respect excited by the young artist's gentleness and sweetness, that, free-spoken as he generally was on all matters, the good butcher, on this solitary occasion, kept his thoughts to himself.

In strenuous application to the Procession, and lonely twilight walks, the summer and part of the autumn passed away. One bright October evening, Stephen, who had been absent for some weeks on a visit to a married daughter, met the young sculptor in his usual haunt, Sunham Avenue, and was struck with the alteration in his appearance. Crabbe has described such an alteration with his usual graphic felicity : —

“ Then his thin cheek assumed a deadly hue,
And all the rose to one small spot withdrew :
They call'd it hectic ; 'twas a fiery flush
More fix'd and deeper than the maiden blush ;
His paler lips the pearly teeth disclosed,
And labouring lungs the lengthening speech opposed.”

Parish Register.

But, perhaps, Hayley's account of his son still more resembles Henry Warner, because it adds the mind's strength to the body's extenuation. "Couldst thou see him now" — he is addressing Flaxman —

"Thou might'st suppose I had before thee brought
A Christian martyr by Ghiberti wrought,
So pain has crush'd his form with dire controul,
And so the seraph Patience arm'd his soul."

Letters on Sculpture.

He was leaning against a tree in the full light of the bright Hunter's moon, when Stephen accosted him with his usual rough kindness, and insisted on his accepting the support of his stout arm to help him home. Henry took it gratefully; in truth, he could hardly have walked that distance without such an aid; and for some time they walked on slowly and in silence; the bright moonbeams chequering the avenue, sleeping on the moss-grown thatch of the cottage roofs, and playing with a silvery radiance on the clear ponds that starred the common. It was a beautiful scene, and Henry lingered to look upon it, when his companion, admonished by the fallen leaves, damp and dewy under foot, and the night wind sighing through the trees, begged him not to loiter, chiding him, as gently as Stephen could chide, for coming so far at such an hour.

"It was foolish," replied Henry; "but I love these trees, and I shall never see them again." And then he smiled, and began talking cheerfully of the bright moonbeams, and their fine effect upon the water; and Stephen drew the back of his hard huge hand across his eyes, and thought himself a great fool, and wondered how sweet smiles and hopeful happy words should make one sad; and when an acorn dropped from a tree at his feet, and the natural thought passed through his mind, "Poor youth, so he will fall!" Stephen had nothing for it but to hem away the choking sensation in his throat, and begin to lecture the invalid in good earnest.

After landing him safely in his own parlour, and charging Louis to take care of his friend, Stephen drew his good hostess to the gate of her little garden:

"This poor lad must have the best advice, Mrs. Duval."

"Oh, Mr. Lane! he won't hear of it. The expense ——"

"Hang the expense, woman! he *shall* have advice," reiterated Stephen; "he must, and he shall."

“ Oh, Mr. Lane ! I have begged and entreated,” rejoined Mrs. Duval, “ and so has Louis. But the expense ! For all he pays me so regularly, I am sure that he is poor — very poor. He lives upon next to nothing ; and is so uneasy if I get him any little thing better than ordinary ! — and Louis caught him the other day arranging his drawings and casts, and putting up his books, and writing letters about them to some gentleman in London, to pay for his funeral, he said, and save me trouble after he was dead : — I thought Louis would have broken his heart. He reckoned upon selling that fine work in the shed here — the Procession — I forget what they call it, and it’s almost finished ; but he’s too weak to work upon it now, and I know that it frets him, though he never utters a complaint. And then, if he dies, my poor boy will die too ! ”

“ Could not one manage to make him take a bit of money, somehow, as a loan, or a gift ? ” inquired Stephen, his hand involuntarily seeking his breeches pocket, and pulling out a well-laden canvas-bag.

“ No,” replied Mrs. Duval, “ that’s impossible. The poorer he gets, the prouder he grows. You could no more persuade him to take money than to send for a doctor.”

“ Dang it ! he shall, though ! ” returned honest Stephen. “ We’ll see about that in the morning. In the mean while, do you go home with me, and try if you and my mistress can’t find something that the poor lad will like. She has been making some knick-knacks to-day, I know, for little Peggy our grand-daughter, who has been ill, and whom we have brought home for change of air. Doubtless there’ll be some to spare, — and if there is not, he wants it worst.”

And in an half-an-hour Mrs. Duval returned to the Friary Cottage, laden with old wine and niceties of all sorts from the well-furnished store closet, and a large basin of jelly of dear Mrs. Lane’s own making. Ill as he was, and capricious as is a sick man’s appetite, our invalid, who, like everybody that had ever seen her, loved Margaret Lane, could not reject the viands which came so recommended.

The next morning saw Stephen an unexpected visitor in the young sculptor’s studio, fixed in wondering admiration before the great work. “ A procession in honour of Pan ! ” repeated the good butcher. “ Well, I’m no great judge, to be sure,

but I like it, young man ; and I'll tell you why I like it, because it's full of spirit and life ; the folk are all *moving*. Dang it ! look at that horse's head ! how he's tossing it back ! And that girl's petticoat, how light and dancy it seems ! And that lamb, poking its little head out of the basket, — ay, that's right, bleat away ! One would think you had been as much amongst them as I have."

Henry was charmed with Stephen's criticism, and frankly told him so.

"Well, then !" continued Mr. Lane, "since you think me such a good judge of your handiwork, you must let me buy it.* Tell me your price," added he, pulling out an enormous brown leather book, well stuffed with bank-notes ; "I'm th man for a quick bargain."

"Buy the relieveo ! But, my dear Mr. Lane, what will you do with it ?" replied the artist. "Handsome as your new house at Sunham is, this requires space and distance, and —"

"I'm not going to put in any house of mine, I promise you, my lad," replied Mr. Lane, half affronted. "I hope I know better what is fitting for a plain tradesman ; and if I don't, my Margaret does. But I'll tell you what I mean to do with it," continued he, recovering his good humour, — "it was my wife's thought. I shall make a present of it to the corporation, to put up in the Town-hall. I've been a rare plague to them all my life, and it is but handsome, now that I am going away as far as Sunham, to make up with them ; so I shall send them this as a parting gift. Dang it ! how well it'll look in the old hall !" shouted he, drowning with his loud exclamations poor Henry's earnest thanks, and unfeigned reluctance — for Henry felt the real motive of a purchase so much out of the good butcher's way, and tried to combat his resolution. "I will have it, I tell you ! But I make one condition, that you'll see a doctor this very day, and that you are not to touch the Procession again till he gives you leave. I certainly shan't send it to them till the spring. And now tell me the price, for have it I will !"

And the price was settled, though with considerable difficulty, of an unusual kind ; the estimate of the patron being much higher than that of the artist. The purchase was com-

* Vide note 2, at the end of the paper.

pleted — but the work was never finished: for before the last acorn fell, Stephen's forebodings were accomplished, and the young sculptor and his many sorrows, his hopes, his fears, his high aspirations, and his unhappy love, were laid at rest in the peaceful grave. The only work of his now remaining at Belford is a monument to the memory of the poor Abbé, executed from one of Louis' most simple designs.

Note 1. — The poetry of John Keats is, like all poetry of a very high style and very unequal execution, so much more talked of than really known, that I am tempted to add the Hymn to Pan, as well as the Procession, which is necessary to the comprehension of my little story. Perhaps it is the finest and most characteristic specimen that could be found of his wonderful pictorial power.

PROCESSION AND HYMN IN HONOUR OF PAN.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along,
 Bearing the burden of a shepherd-song;
 Each having a white wicker overbrimm'd
 With April's tender younglings: next, well trimm'd,
 A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
 As may be read of in Arcadian books;
 Such as sate listening round Apollo's pipe,
 When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
 Let his divinity o'erflowing die
 In music through the vales of Thessaly:
 Some idly trail'd their sheep-hooks on the ground,
 And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound
 With ebon-tipped flutes: close after these,
 Now coming from beneath the forest trees,
 A venerable priest full soberly
 Begirt with ministering looks: always his eye
 Stedfast upon the matted turf he kept,
 And after him his sacred vestments swept.
 From his right hand there swung a vase, milk white,
 Of mingled wine out-sparkling generous light;
 And in his left he held a basket full
 Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull;
 Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still
 Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.
 His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,
 Seem'd like a poll of ivy, in the teeth
 Of Winter hoar. Then came another crowd
 Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud
 Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd,
 Up-follow'd by a multitude that rear'd
 Their voices to the clouds, a fair-wrought car,
 Easily rolling, so as scarce to mar
 The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown,
 Who stood therein did seem of great renown
 Among the throng; his youth was fully blown,
 Showing like Ganymede to manhood grown;

And, for those simple times, his garments were
 A chieftain-king's : beneath his breast, half bare,
 Was hung a silver bugle, and between
 His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen.
 A smile was on his countenance ; he seem'd
 To common lookers-on like one who dream'd
 Of idleness in groves Elysian :
 But there were some who feelingly could scan
 A lurking trouble in his nether-lip,
 And see that oftentimes the reins would slip
 Through his forgotten hands : then would they sigh,
 And think of yellow leaves, of owlet's cry,
 Of logs piled solemnly.—Ah, well-a-day !
 Why should our young Endymion pine away ?

Soon the assembly, in a circle ranged,
 Stood silent round the shrine : each look was changed
 To sudden veneration : women meek
 Beckon'd their sons to silence ; while each cheek
 Of virgin-bloom paled gently for slight fear ;
 Endymion too, without a forest peer,
 Stood wan and wale, and with an unawed face,
 Among his brothers of the mountain-chase.
 In midst of all, the venerable priest
 Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least,
 And, after lifting up his aged hands,
 Thus spake he : — “ Men of Latmos ! shepherd bands
 Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks :
 Whether descended from beneath the rocks
 That overtop your mountains ; whether come
 From valleys where the pipe is never dumb ;
 Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs
 Blue harebells lightly, and where prickly furze
 Buds lavish gold ; or ye, whose precious charge
 Nibble their fill at Ocean's very marge,
 Whose mellow reeds are touched with sounds forlorn,
 By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn :
 Mothers and wives ! who day by day prepare
 The scrip with needments for the mountain air ;
 And all ye gentle girls, who foster up
 Udderless lambs, and in a little cup
 Will put choice honey for a favour'd youth :
 Yea, every one attend ! for in good truth
 Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
 Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
 Night swollen mushrooms ? Are not our wide plains
 Speckled with countless fleeces ? Have not rains
 Green'd over April's lap ? No howling sad
 Sickens our fearful ewes ; and we have had
 Great bounty from Endymion our lord.
 The earth is glad : the merry lark has pour'd
 His early song against yon breezy sky,
 That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity.”

Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a spire
 Ofsteeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire ;
 Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod
 With wine in honour of the Shepherd-god.”
 Now while the earth was drinking it, and while
 Bay-leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,
 And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright
 'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light
 Spread grayly eastward, thus a chorus sang :

“ O thou ! whose mighty palace roof doth hang
 From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
 Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
 Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness :

Who lovest to see the hamadryads dress
 Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken,
 And through whole solemn hours dost sit and hearken
 The dreary melody of bedded reeds,
 In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
 The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth;
 Bethinking thee how melancholy loath
 Thou wert to lose fair Syrinx — do thou now,
 By thy love's milky brow,
 By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
 Hear us, great Pan!

“ O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet turtles
 Passion their voices cooingly among myrtles,
 What time thou wanderest at eventide
 Through sunny meadows that outskirt the side
 Of thine enmossed realms : O thou, to whom
 Broad-leaved fig trees even now foredoom
 Their ripen'd fruitage ; yellow-girted bees
 Their golden honeycombs ; our village leas
 Their fairest blossom'd beans and popped corn ;
 The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
 To sing for thee ; low-creeping strawberries
 Their summer coolness ; pent-up butterflies
 Their freckled wings ; yea, the fresh-budding year
 All its completions — be quickly near, ,
 By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
 O Forester divine !

“ Thou to whom every faun and satyr flies
 For willing service ; whether to surprise
 The squatted hare, while in half-sleeping fit ;
 Or upward ragged precipices flit ;
 To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw ;
 Or by mysterious enticement draw
 Bewilder'd Shepherds to their path again ;
 Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,
 And gather up all fancifullest shells
 For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
 And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping ;
 Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,
 The while they pelt each other on the crown
 With silvery oak-apples and fir-cones brown ; —
 By all the echoes that about thee ring,
 Hear us, O Satyr-King !

“ O hearkener to the loud-clapping shears,
 While ever and anon to his shorn peers
 A lamb goes bleating : winder of the horn,
 When snorting wild-boars routing tender corn
 Anger our huntsmen ; breather round our farms
 To keep off mildews and all weather harms :
 Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds
 That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,
 And wither drearily on barren moors :
 Dread opener of the mysterious doors
 Leading to universal knowledge — see,
 Great son of Dryope !
 The many that are come to pay their vows
 With leaves about their brows ! —
 Be still the unimaginable lodge
 For solitary thinkings ; such as dodge
 Conception to the very bourne of Heaven,
 Then leave the naked brain ; be still the leaven
 That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
 Gives it a touch ethereal — a new birth :
 Be still a symbol of immensity ;
 A firmament reflected in a sea ;

An element filling the space between ;
 An unknown — but no more : we humbly screen
 With uplift hands our foreheads lowly bending,
 And giving out a shout most heaven-rending,
 Conjure thee to receive our humble pæan
 Upon thy mount Lycean ! ”

Everwhile they brought the burden to a close
 A shout from the whole multitude arose
 That linger'd in the air like dying rolls
 Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals
 Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.
 Meantime on shady levels, mossy fine,
 Young companies nimbly began dancing
 To the swift treble pipe and humming string :
 Ay, those fair living forms swam heavenly
 To tunes forgotten, out of memory ;
 Fair creatures, whose young children's children bred
 Thermopylæ its heroes, not yet dead,
 But in old marbles ever beautiful.

KEATS'S *Endymion*.

Note 2.— Let not Stephen Lane's conduct be called unnatural ! I do verily believe that there is no instance that can be invented of generosity and delicacy that might not find a parallel amongst the middle classes of England, the affluent tradesmen of the metropolis and the great towns, who often act as if they held their riches on the tenure of benevolence.

With regard to Stephen Lane's purchase, I happen to be furnished with a most excellent precedent — a case completely in point, and of very recent occurrence. It was told to me, and most charmingly told, by one whom I am proud to be permitted to call my friend, the Lady Madalina Palmer, who related the story with the delightful warmth with which generous people speak of generosity ; — and I have now before me a letter from one of the parties concerned, which states the matter better still. But that letter I must not transcribe, and Lady Madalina is too far off to dictate to me in the pretty Scotch, which, from her, one likes better than English ; so that I am fain to record the naked facts as simply and briefly as possible, leaving them to produce their own effect on those who love the arts, and who admire a warm-hearted liberality in every rank of life.

Some time in November, 1831, Mr. Cribb, an ornamental gilder in London, a superb artist in *his* line, and employed in the most delicate and finest work by the Duke of Devon-

shire and other men of taste amongst the high nobility, was struck with a small picture — a cattle piece — in a shop window in Greek Street. On inquiring for the artist, he could hear no tidings of him ; but the people of the shop promised to find him out. Time after time our persevering lover of the Arts called to repeat his inquiries, but always unsuccessfully, until about three months after, when he found that the person he sought was a Mr. Thomas Sydney Cooper, an English artist, who had been for many years settled at Brussels as a drawing-master, but had been driven from that city by the revolution, which had deprived him of his pupils, amongst whom were some members of the royal family, and, unable to obtain employment in London as a cattle painter, had, with the generous self-devotion which most ennoble a man of genius, supported his family by making lithographic drawings of fashionable caps and bonnets, — I suppose as a puff for some milliner, or some periodical which deals in costumes. In the midst of this interesting family, and of these caps and bonnets, Mr. Cribb found him ; and deriving from what he saw of his sketches and drawings additional conviction of his genius, immediately commissioned him to paint him a picture on his own subject and at his own price, making such an advance as the richest artist would not scruple to accept on a commission, conjuring him to leave off caps and bonnets, and foretelling his future eminence. Mr. Cribb says that he shall never forget the delight of Mrs. Cooper's face when he gave the order — he has a right to the luxury of such a recollection. Well ! the picture was completed, and when completed, our friend Mr. Cribb, who is not a man to do *his* work by halves, bespoke a companion, and, while that was painting, showed the first to a great number of artists and gentlemen, who all agreed in expressing the strongest admiration, and in wondering where the painter could have been hidden. Before the second picture was half finished, a Mr. Carpenter (I believe that I am right in the name) gave Mr. Cooper a commission for a piece, which was exhibited in May, 1833, at the Suffolk Street Gallery ; and from that moment orders poured in, and the artist's fortune is made.

It is right to add, that Mr. Cooper was generously eager to have this story made known, and Mr. Cribb as generously

averse from its publication. But surely it ought to be recorded, for the example's sake, and for their mutual honour. I ought also to say, that it is only in heart, and pocket, and station that Mr. Cribb resembles my butcher; the former being evidently a man of fair education and excellent taste. Oh! that I could have printed his account of this matter! It was so natural, so *naïf*, so characteristic, so amusing. I dared not commit such a trespass on the sacredness of private communication; but I shall keep it to my dying day, and leave it to my heirs; so that if hereafter, some sixty years hence, a future Allan Cunningham shall delight the world with another series of Lives of the Painters, the history of the English Paul Potter may be adorned and illustrated by the warm-hearted and graphic narrative of his earliest patron.

BELLES OF THE BALL-ROOM, No. II.

MATCH-MAKING.

THE proudest of all our proud country gentlewomen,—she who would most thoroughly have disdained the unlucky town ladies, who are destined to look on brick walls instead of green trees, and to tread on stone pavements instead of gravel walks,—was beyond all doubt my good friend Mrs. Leslie.

Many years ago, a family of that name came to reside in our neighbourhood; and being persons thoroughly *comme il faut*, who had taken, on a long lease, the commodious and creditable mansion called Hallenden Hall, with its large park-like paddock, its gardens, greenhouses, conservatories, and so forth,—and who evidently intended to live in a style suited to their habitation,—were immediately visited by the inmates of all the courts, manors, parks, places, lodges, and castles within reach.

Mr. Leslie was, as was soon discovered, a man of ancient family and good estate, who had left his own county on the loss of a contested election, or some such cause of disgust, and had passed the last few years in London for the education of his daughters. He was, too, that exceedingly acceptable and

somewhat rare thing, a lively, talking, agreeable man, very clever and a little quaint, and making his conversation tell as much by a certain off-handedness of phrase and manner, as by the shrewdness of his observations, and his extensive knowledge of the world. He had also, besides his pleasantry and good humour, another prime requisite for country popularity : although greatly above the general run of his neighbours in intellect, he much resembled them in his tastes ; — loved shooting, fishing, and hunting in the morning ; liked good dinners, good wine, and a snug rubber at night ; farmed with rather less loss of money than usually befalls a gentleman ; was a staunch partisan at vestries and turnpike meetings ; a keen politician at the reading-room and the club ; frequented races and coursing meetings ; had a fancy for the more business-like gaieties of quarter sessions and grand juries ; accepted a lieutenancy in the troop of yeomanry cavalry, and actually served as churchwarden during the second year of his residence in the parish. In a word, he was an active, stirring, bustling personage, whose life of mind and thorough unaffectedness made him universally acceptable to rich and poor. At first sight there was a homeliness about him, a carelessness of appearance and absence of pretension, which rather troubled his more aristocratic compeers ; but the gentleman was so evident in all that he said or did, in tone and accent, act and word, that his little peculiarities were speedily forgotten, or only remembered to make him still more cordially liked.

If Mr. Leslie erred on the side of unpretendingness, his wife took good care not to follow his example : she had pretensions enough of all sorts to have set up twenty fine ladies out of her mere superfluity. The niece of an Irish baron and the sister of a Scotch countess, she fairly wearied all her acquaintance with the titles of her relatives. “ My uncle, Lord Linton — my brother-in-law, the Earl of Paisley,” and all the Lady Lucys, Lady Elizabeths, Lady Janes, and Lady Marys of the one noble house, and the honourable masters and misses of the other, were twanged in the ears of her husband, children, servants, and visitors, every day and all day long. She could not say that the weather was fine without quoting my lord, or order dinner without referring to my lady. This peculiarity was the pleasure, the amusement of her life. Its business was to display, and if possible to marry her daughters ; and I

think she cherished her grand connections the more, as being, in some sort, implements or accessories in her designs upon rich bachelors, than for any other cause ; since, greatly as she idolised rank in her own family, she had seen too much of its disadvantages when allied with poverty, not to give a strong preference to wealth in the grand pursuit of husband-hunting. She would, to be sure, have had no objection to an affluent peer for a son-in-law, had such a thing offered ; but as the commodity, not too common anywhere, was particularly scarce in our county, she wisely addressed herself to the higher order of country squires, men of acres who inherited large territories and fine places, or men of money who came by purchase into similar possessions, together with their immediate heirs, leaving the younger brothers of the nobility, in common with all other younger brothers, unsought and uncared-for.

Except in the grand matters of pedigrees and match-making, my good friend Mrs. Leslie was a sufficiently common person ; rather vulgar and dowdy in the morning, when, like many country gentlewomen of her age and class, she made amends for unnecessary finery by more unnecessary shabbiness, and trotted about the place in an old brown stuff gown, much resembling the garment called a Joseph worn by our great-grandmothers, surmounted by a weather-beaten straw bonnet and a sun-burnt bay wig ; and particularly stately in an evening, when silks and satins made after the newest fashion, caps radiant with flowers, hats waving with feathers, chandelier ear-rings, and an ermine-lined cloak, the costly gift of a diplomatic relation — (“ My cousin, the envoy,” rivalled in her talk even “ my sister the countess,”) — converted her at a stroke into a chaperon of the very first water.

Her daughters, Barbara and Caroline, were pretty girls enough, and would probably have been far prettier, had Nature, in their case, only been allowed fair play. As it was, they had been laced and braced, and drilled and starved, and kept from the touch of sun, or air, or fire, until they had become too slender, too upright, too delicate, both in figure and complexion. To my eye they always looked as if they had been originally intended to have been plumper and taller, with more colour in their cheeks, more spring and vigour in their motions, more of health and life about them, poor things ! Nevertheless, they were prettyish girls, with fine hair, fine

eyes, fine teeth, and an expression of native good humour, which, by great luck, their preposterous education had not been able to eradicate.

Certainly, if an injudicious education could have spoilt young persons naturally well-tempered and well-disposed, these poor girls would have sunk under its evil influence. From seven years old to seventeen, they had been trained for display and for conquest, and could have played without ear, sung without voice, and drawn without eye, against any misses of their inches in the county. Never were accomplishments more thoroughly travestied. Barbara, besides the usual young-lady iniquities of the organ, the piano, the harp, and the guitar, distended her little cheeks like a trumpeter, by blowing the flute and the flageolet ; whilst her sister, who had not breath for the wind instruments, encroached in a different way on the musical prerogative of man, by playing most outrageously on the fiddle—a female Paganini !

They painted in all sorts of styles, from “the human face divine,” in oils, crayons, and miniatures, down to birds and butterflies, so that the whole house was a series of exhibition rooms ; the walls were hung with their figures and landscapes, the tables covered with their sketches ; you sat upon their performances in the shape of chair cushions, and trod on them in the form of ottomans. A family likeness reigned throughout these productions. Various in style, but alike in badness, all were distinguished by the same uniform unsucccess. Nor did they confine their attempts to the fine arts. There was no end to their misdoings. They japanned boxes, embroidered work-bags, gilded picture-frames, constructed pincushions, bound books, and made shoes. For universality the admirable Crichton was a joke to them. There was nothing in which they had not failed.

During one winter (and winter is the season of a country belle) Mrs. Leslie traded upon her daughters’ accomplishments. Every morning visit was an exhibition, every dinner party a concert, and the unlucky assistants looked, listened, yawned, and lied, and got away as soon as possible, according to the most approved fashion in such cases. Half-a-year’s experience, however, convinced the prudent mamma that acquirements alone would not suffice for her purpose ; and having obtained for the Miss Leslies the desirable reputation

of being the most accomplished young ladies in the neighbourhood, she relinquished the proud but unprofitable pleasure of exhibition, and wisely addressed herself to the more hopeful task of humouring the fancies and flattering the vanity of others.

In this pursuit she displayed a degree of zeal, perseverance, and resource, worthy of a better cause. Not a bachelor of fortune within twenty miles, but Mrs. Leslie took care to be informed of his tastes and habits, and to offer one or other of her fair nymphs to his notice, after the manner most likely to attract his attention and fall in with his ways. Thus, for a whole season, Bab (in spite of the danger to her complexion) hunted with the Copley hounds, riding and fencing* to admiration—not in chase of the fox, poor girl, for which she cared as little as any she in Christendom—but to catch, if it might be, that eminent and wealthy Nimrod, Sir Thomas Copley,—who, after all, governed by that law of contrast which so often presides over the connubial destiny, married a town beauty, who never mounted a horse in her life, and would have fainted at the notion of leaping a five-barred gate; whilst Caroline, with equal disregard to her looks, was set to feed poultry, milk cows, make butter, and walk over ploughed fields with Squire Thornley, an agriculturist of the old school, who declared that his wife should understand the conduct of a farm as well as of a house, and followed up his maxim by marrying his dairy-maid. They studied mathematics to please a Cambridge scholar, and made verses to attract a literary lord; taught Sunday schools and attended missionary meetings to strike the serious; and frequented balls, concerts, archery clubs, and water-parties to charm the gay; were every thing to every body, seen every where, known to every one; and yet at the end of three years were, in spite of jaunts to Brighton, Cheltenham, and London, a trip to Paris, and a tour through Switzerland, just as likely to remain the two accomplished Miss Leslies as ever they had been. To “wither on the virgin stalk,” seemed their destiny.

How this happened is difficult to tell. The provoked mother laid the fault partly on the inertness of her husband, who,

* By “fencing,” I do not mean here practising “the noble science of defence,” but something, sooth to say, almost as manly. I use the word in its fox-hunting sense, and intend by it that Miss Barbara took flying leaps over hedges and ditches, and five-barred gates.

to say truth, had watched her manœuvres with some amusement, but without using the slightest means to assist her schemes ; and partly on the refractoriness of her son and heir, a young gentleman who, although sent first to Eton, most aristocratic of public schools, and then to Christ Church, most lordly of colleges, with the especial maternal injunction to form good connections, so that he might pick up an heiress for himself and men of fortune for his sisters, had, with unexampled perversity, cultivated the friendship of the clever, the entertaining, and the poor, and was now on the point of leaving Oxford without having made a single acquaintance worth knowing. “ This, this was the unkindest cut of all ;” for Richard, a lad of good person and lively parts, had always been in her secret soul his mother’s favourite ; and now, to find him turn round on her, and join his father in laying the blame of her several defeats on her own bad generalship and want of art to conceal her designs, was really too vexatious, especially as Barbara and Caroline, who had hitherto been patterns of filial obedience, entering blindly into all her objects and doing their best to bring them to bear, now began to show symptoms of being ashamed of the unmaidenly forwardness into which they had been betrayed, and even to form a resolution (especially Barbara, who had more of her father’s and brother’s sense than the good-natured but simple Caroline) not to join in such manœuvring again. “ It cannot be right in me, mamma,” said she one day, “ to practise pistol-shooting with Mr. Greville, when no other lady does so ; and therefore, if you please, I shall not go — I am sure you cannot wish me to do anything not right.”

“ Particularly as there’s no use in it,” added Richard : “ fire as often as you may, you’ll never hit that mark.”

And Mr. Greville and the pistol-shooting were given up ; and Mrs. Leslie felt her authority shaken.

Affairs were in this posture, when the arrival of a visitor after her own heart — young, rich, unmarried, and a baronet — renewed the hopes of our match-maker.

For some months they had had at Hallenden Hall a very unpretending, but in my mind a very amiable inmate, Mary Morland, the only daughter of Mr. Leslie’s only sister, who, her parents being dead, and herself and her brother left in indigent circumstances, had accepted her uncle’s invitation to

reside in his family as long as it suited her convenience, and was now on the point of departing to keep her brother's house, a young clergyman recently ordained, who intended to eke out the scanty income of his curacy by taking pupils, for which arduous office he was eminently qualified by his excellent private character and high scholastic attainments.

Mary Morland was that very delightful thing, an unaffected intelligent young woman, well-read, well-informed, lively and conversable. She had a good deal of her uncle's acuteness and talent, and a vein of pleasantry, which differed from his only as much as pleasantry feminine ought to differ from pleasantry masculine: he was humorous, and she was arch. I do not know that I ever heard anything more agreeable than her flow of sprightly talk, always light and sparkling, spirited and easy, often rich in literary allusion, *but never degenerating* into pretension or pedantry. She was entirely devoid of the usual young-lady accomplishments (an unspeakable relief in that house!); neither played, nor sung, nor drew, nor danced; made no demand on praise, no claim on admiration, and was as totally free from display as from affectation in the exercise of her great conversational power. Such a person is sure to be missed, go where she may; and every one capable of appreciating her many engaging qualities felt, with Mr. Leslie, that her loss would be irreparable at Hallenden.

The evil day however arrived, as such days are wont to arrive, all too soon. William Morland was actually come to carry his sister to their distant home; for they were of the "North countrie," and his curacy was situate in far Northumberland. He was accompanied by an old schoolfellow and intimate friend, in whose carriage Mary and himself were to perform their long journey; and it was on this kind companion, rich and young, a baronet and a bachelor, that Mrs. Leslie at once set her heart for a son-in-law.

Her manœuvres began the very evening of his arrival. She had been kind to Miss Morland from the moment she ascertained that she was a plain though lady-like woman of six-and-twenty, wholly unaccomplished in her sense of the word, and altogether the most unlikely person in the world to rival her two belles. She had been always kind to "poor dear Mary," as she called her; but as soon as she beheld Sir Arthur Selby, she became the very fondest of aunts, insisted that Barbara

should furnish her wardrobe and Caroline paint her portrait, and that the whole party should stay until these operations were satisfactorily concluded.

Sir Arthur, who seemed to entertain a great regard and affection for his two friends,—who, the only children of the clergyman of the parish, had been his old companions and playmates at the manor-house, and from whom he had been parted during a long tour in Greece, Italy, and Spain,—consented with a very good grace to this arrangement; the more so as, himself a lively and clever man, he perceived, apparently with great amusement, the designs of his hostess, and for the first two or three days humoured them with much drollery; affecting to be an epicure, that she might pass off her cook's excellent confectionery for Miss Caroline's handiwork; and even pretending to have sprained his ankle, that he might divert himself by observing in how many ways the same fair lady—who, something younger, rather prettier, and far more docile than her sister, had been selected by Mrs. Leslie for his intended bride—would be pressed by that accomplished match-maker into his service; handing him his coffee, for instance, fetching him books and newspapers, offering him her arm when he rose from the sofa, following him about with footstools, cushions, and ottomans, and waiting upon him just like a valet or a page in female attire.

At the end of that period,—from some unexplained change of feeling, whether respect for his friend William Morland, or weariness for acting a part so unsuited to him, or some relenting in favour of the young lady,—he threw off at once his lameness and his affectation, and resumed his own singularly natural and delightful manner. I saw a great deal of him, for my father's family and the Selbys had intermarried once or twice in every century since the Conquest; and though it might have puzzled a genealogist to decide how near or how distant was the relationship, yet, as amongst North-country folk "blood is warmer than water," we continued not only to call each other cousins, but to entertain much of the kindly feeling by which family connection often is, and always should be, accompanied. My father and Mr. Leslie had always been intimate, and Mary Morland and myself having taken a strong liking to each other, we met at one house or the other almost every day; and, accustomed as I was to watch the progress of

Mrs. Leslie's manœuvres, the rise, decline, and fall of her several schemes, I soon perceived that her hopes and plans were in full activity on the present occasion.

It was, indeed, perfectly evident that she expected to hail Caroline as Lady Selby before many months were past; and she had more reason for the belief than had often happened to her, inasmuch as Sir Arthur not only yielded with the best possible grace to her repeated entreaties for the postponement of his journey, but actually paid the young lady considerable attention, watching the progress of her portrait of Miss Morland, and aiding her not only by advice but assistance, to the unspeakable benefit of the painting, and even carrying his complaisance so far as to ask her to sing every evening,—he being the very first person who had ever voluntarily caused the issue of those notes, which more resembled the screaming of a macaw than the tones of a human being. To be sure, he did not listen,—that would have been too much to expect from mortal; but he not only regularly requested her to sing, but took care, by suggesting single songs, to prevent her sister from singing with her,—who, thus left to her own devices, used to sit in a corner listening to William Morland with a sincerity and earnestness of attention very different from the make-believe admiration which she had been used to show by her mamma's orders to the clever men of fortune whom she had been put forward to attract. That Mrs. Leslie did not see what was going forward in that quarter, was marvellous; but her whole soul was engrossed by the desire to clutch Sir Arthur, and so long as he called upon Caroline for bravura after bravura, for scena after scena, she was happy.

Mr. Leslie, usually wholly inattentive to such proceedings, was on this occasion more clear-sighted. He asked Mary Morland one day “whether she knew what her brother and Sir Arthur were about?” and, on her blushing and hesitating in a manner very unusual with her, added, chucking her under the chin, “A word to the wise is enough, my queen: I am not quite a fool, whatever your aunt may be, and so you may tell the young gentlemen.” And with that speech he walked off.

The next morning brought a still fuller declaration of his sentiments. Sir Arthur had received, by post, a letter which had evidently affected him greatly, and had handed it to Wil-

liam Morland, who read it with equal emotion ; but neither of them had mentioned its contents, or alluded to it in any manner. After breakfast, the young men walked off together, and the girls separated to their different employments. I, who had arrived there to spend the day, was about to join them, when I was stopped by Mr. Leslie. "I want to speak to you," said he, "about that cousin of yours. My wife thinks he's going to marry Caroline ; whereas it's plain to me, as doubtless it must be to you, that whatever attention he may be paying to that simple child — and, for my own part, I don't see that he *is* paying her any — is merely to cover William Morland's attachment to Bab. So that the end of Mrs. Leslie's wise schemes will be, to have one daughter the wife of a country curate —"

"A country curate, Mr. Leslie !" ejaculated Mrs. Leslie, holding up her hands in amazement and horror.

"And the other," pursued Mr. Leslie, "an old maid."

"An old maid !" reiterated Mrs. Leslie, in additional dismay — "An old maid !" Her very wig stood on end. But what further she would have said was interrupted by the entrance of the accused party.

"I am come, Mr. Leslie," said Sir Arthur,—"do not move, Mrs. Leslie — pray stay, my dear cousin, — I am come to present to you a double petition. The letter which I received this morning was, like most human events, of mingled yarn — it brought intelligence of good and of evil. I have lost an old and excellent friend, the rector of Donleigh-cum-Appleton, and have, by that loss, an excellent living to present to my friend William Morland. It is above fifteen hundred a-year, with a large house, a fine garden, and a park-like glebe, altogether a residence fit for any lady ; and it comes at a moment in which such a piece of preferment is doubly welcome, since the first part of my petition relates to him. Hear it favourably, my dear sir — my dear madam : he loves your Barbara — and Barbara, I hope and believe, loves him."

"There, Mrs. Leslie !" interrupted Mr. Leslie, with an arch nod. "There ! do you hear that ?"

"You are both favourably disposed, I am sure," resumed Sir Arthur. "Such a son-in-law must be an honour to any man — must he not, my dear madam ? — and I, for my part, have a brother's interest in his suit."

“There, Mr. Leslie!” ejaculated in her turn Mrs. Leslie, returning her husband’s nod most triumphantly. “A brother’s interest! — do you hear that?”

“Since,” pursued Sir Arthur, “I have to crave your intercession with his dear and admirable sister, whom I have loved, without knowing it, ever since we were children in the nursery, and who now, although confessing that she does not hate me, talks of want of fortune — as if I had not enough; and of want of beauty and want of accomplishments — as if her matchless elegance and unrivalled conversation were not worth all the doll-like prettiness or tinsel acquirements under the sun. Pray intercede for me, dear cousin! — dear sir!” continued the ardent lover; whilst Mr. Leslie, without taking the slightest notice of the appeal, nodded most provokingly to the crest-fallen match-maker, and begged to know how she liked Sir Arthur’s opinion of her system of education?

What answer the lady made, this deponent saith not — indeed, I believe she was too angry to speak — but the result was all that could be desired by the young people: the journey was again postponed; the double marriage celebrated at Hallenden; and Miss Caroline, as bridesmaid, accompanied the fair brides to “canny Northumberland,” to take her chance for a husband, unaided and unimpeded by her manœuvring mamma.

MRS. TOMKINS, THE CHEESEMONGER.

PERHAPS the finest character in all Molière is that of Madame Pernelle, the scolding grandmother in the “Tartufe;” at least, that scene (the opening scene of that glorious play), in which, tottering in at a pace which her descendants have difficulty in keeping up with, she puts to flight her grandson, and her daughter-in-law’s brother, (think of making men fly the field!) and puts to silence her daughter-in-law, her granddaughter, and even the pert soubrette, (think of making women hold their tongues!) and finally boxes her own waiting-maid’s ears for yawning and looking tired, — that scene of matchless scolding has always seemed to me unrivalled in the comic drama. The English version of it in “The Hypocrite” is

far less amusing, the old Lady Lambert being represented in that piece rather as a sour devotee, whose fiery zeal, and her submission to Cantwell, and even to Mawworm, form the chief cause, the mainspring—as it were, of her lectures; whilst Madame Pernelle, although doubtless the effect of her harangues is heightened and deepened by her perfect conviction that she is right and that all the rest are wrong, has yet a natural gift of shrewishness—is, so to say, a scold born, and would have rated her daughter-in-law and all her descendants, and bestowed her cuffs upon her domestics with equal good-will, though she had never aspired to the reputation of piety, or edified by the example of M. Tartufe. The gift was in her. Not only has Molière beaten, as was to be expected, his own English imitator, but he has achieved the far higher honour of vanquishing, in this single instance, his two great forerunners, Masters Shakspeare and Fletcher. For, although the royal dame of Anjou had a considerable talent for vituperation, and Petruchio's two wives, Katharine and Maria*, were scolds of promise; none of the three, in my mind, could be said to approach Madame Pernelle,—not to mention the superior mode of giving tongue (if I may affront the beautiful race of spaniels by applying in such a way a phrase appropriated to their fine instinct),—to say nothing of the verbal superiority, Flipote's box on the ear remains unrivalled and unapproached. Katherine breaking the lute over her master's head is a joke in comparison.

Now, notwithstanding the great Frenchman's beating his English rivals so much in the representation of a shrew, I am by no means disposed to concede to our Continental neighbours any supremacy in the real living model. I should be as sorry that French women should go beyond us in that particular gift of the tongue, which is a woman's sole weapon, her one peculiar talent, as that their soldiers should beat ours in the more manly way of fighting with sword and with gun, or their painters or poets overpass us in their respective arts. The

* Shakspeare's fine extravaganza, "The Taming of the Shrew," gave rise to an equally pleasant continuation by Fletcher, entitled, "The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed;" a play little known, except to the professed lovers of the old drama, in which Petruchio, having lost his good wife Katharine, is betrayed into a second marriage to a gentle, quiet, demure damsel, called Maria, who, after their nuptials, changes into an absolute fury, turns the tables upon him completely, and succeeds in establishing the female dominion upon the firmest possible basis, being aided throughout by a sort of chorus of married women from town and country.

art of scolding is no trifling accomplishment, and I claim for my countrywomen a high degree of excellence in all the shades and varieties thereunto belonging, from the peevish grumble to the fiery retort — from “the quip modest” to “the countercheck quarrelsome.” The gift is strictly national too; for although one particular district of London (which, indeed, has given its name to the dialect) has been celebrated, and I believe deservedly celebrated, for its breed of scolds; yet I will undertake to pick up in any part of England, at four-and-twenty hours’ notice, a shrew that shall vie with all Billingsgate.

To go no farther for an instance than our own market-town, I will match my worthy neighbour, Mrs. Tomkins, cheesemonger, in Queen Street, against any female fish-vender in Christendom. She, in her single person, simple as she stands there behind her counter, shall outscold the whole parish of Wapping.

Deborah Ford, such was Mrs. Tomkins’s maiden appellation, was the only daughter of a thrifty and thriving yeoman in the county of Wilts, who having, to her own infinite dissatisfaction and the unspeakable discomfort of her family, remained a spinster for more years than she cared to tell, was at length got rid of by a manœuvring stepmother, who made his marrying Miss Deborah the condition of her supplying Mr. Simon Tomkins, cheesemonger, in Belford, with the whole produce of her dairy, celebrated for a certain mock Stilton, which his customers, who got it at about half the price of the real, were wont to extol as incomparably superior to the more genuine and more expensive commodity.

Simon hesitated — looked at Deborah’s sour face; for she had by strong persuasion been induced to promise not to scold — that is to say, not to speak, (for, in her case, the terms were synonymous;) — muttered something which might be understood as a civil excuse, and went to the stable to get ready his horse and chaise. In that short walk, however, the prudent swain recollected that a rival cheesemonger had just set up over against him in the same street of the identical town of Belford; that the aforesaid rival was also a bachelor, and, as Mrs. Ford had hinted, would doubtless not be so blind to his own interest as to neglect to take her mock Stilton, with so small an incumbrance as a sour-looking wife, who was said to

be the best manager in the county ; so that by the time the crafty stepmother re-appeared with a parting glass of capital currant wine, (a sort of English stirrup-cup, which she positively affirmed to be of Deborah's making,) Simon had changed, or as he expressed it, made up his mind to espouse Miss Deborah, for the benefit of his trade and the good of his customers.

Short as was the courtship, and great as were the pains taken by Mrs. Ford (who performed impossibilities in the way of conciliation) to bring the marriage to bear, it had yet nearly gone off three several times, in consequence of Deborah's tongue, and poor Simon's misgivings, on whose mind, especially on one occasion, the night before the wedding, it was powerfully borne, that all the excellence of the currant wine, and all the advantages of the mock Stilton, were but poor compensations, not only for "peace and happy life," and "awful rule and just supremacy," but for the being permitted, in common parlance, to call his soul his own. Things, however, had gone too far. The stepmother talked of honour and character, and broken hearts ; the father hinted at an action for damages, and a certain nephew, Timothy, an attorney-at-law ; whilst a younger brother, six feet two in height, and broad in proportion, more than hinted at a good cudgelling. So Simon married.

Long before the expiration of the honeymoon, he found all his worst fears more than confirmed. His wife—"his mistress," as in the homely country phrase he too truly called her—was the greatest tyrant that ever ruled over a household. Compared with our tigress, Judith Jenkins, now Mrs. Jones, was a lamb. Poor Simon's shopman left him, his maid gave warning, and his apprentice ran away ; so that he who could not give warning, and was ashamed to run away, remained the one solitary subject of this despotic queen, the luckless man-of-all-work of that old and well-accustomed shop. Bribery, under the form of high wages and unusual indulgences, did to a certain point remedy this particular evil ; so that they came at last only to change servants about once a fortnight on an average, and to lose their apprentices, some by running away and some by buying themselves off, not oftener than twice a year. Indeed, in one remarkable instance, they had the good fortune to keep a cook, who hap-

pened to be stone deaf, upwards of a twelvemonth ; and, in another still more happy case, were provided with a permanent shopman, in the shape of an old pliant rheumatic Frenchman, who had lived in some Italian warehouse in London until fairly worn off his legs, in which plight his importers had discarded him, to find his way back to *la belle France* as best he could. Happening to fall in with him, on going to the London warehouse with an order for Parmesan, receiving an excellent character of him from his employers, and being at his wit's end for a man, Mr. Simon Tomkins, after giving him due notice of his wife's failing, engaged the poor old foreigner, and carried him home to Queen Street in triumph. A much-enduring man was M. Leblanc ! Next after his master, he, beyond all doubt, was the favourite object of Deborah's ob- jurgation ; but, by the aid of snuff and philosophy, he bore it bravely. "*Mais je suis philosophe !*" cried the poor old Frenchman, shrugging his shoulders, and tapping his box when the larum of his mistress's tongue ran through the house—" *Toutefois je suis philosophe !*" exclaimed he with a patient sigh ; and Deborah, who, without comprehending the phrase, understood it to convey some insinuation against herself, redoubled her clamour at the sound.

Tobacco in its various forms seems to have been the chief consolation of her victims. If snuff and philosophy were Leblanc's resources, a pipe and a tankard were his master's ; and in both cases the objects to which they resorted for comfort drew down fresh lectures from their liege lady. She complained of the smell. And of a surety the smell is an abomination ; only that, her father and her seven brothers, to say nothing of half-a-dozen uncles and some score of cousins, having been as atrociously given to smoking as if they had been born and bred in Germany, so that eight or ten chimneys had been constantly going in one room in the old farm-house of Bevis-land, the fumes of tobacco might be said to be her native air ; and Mr. Tomkins's stock-in-trade consisting, besides the celebrated cheese which had so unluckily brought him acquainted with her, of soap, candles, salt-butter, bacon, pickles, oils, and other unsavoury commodities, one would really think that no one particular stench could greatly increase the ill odours of that most unfragrant shop. She, however, imputed all the steams that invaded her nostrils either to her

shopman's snuff or her husband's smoking, and threatened ten times a day to demolish the pipes and the boxes, which were good for nothing, as she observed, but to keep "the men-folk idle and to poison every Christian thing about them;" an affront which both parties endured with a patient silence, which only served to exasperate her wrath.

Find it where he would, much need had poor Mr. Tomkins of comfort. Before his marriage, he had been a spruce dapper little man, with blue eyes, a florid complexion, and hair of the colour commonly called sandy,—alert in movement, fluent in speech, and much addicted to laughing, whether at his own jokes or the jokes of his neighbours; he belonged to the Bachelors' Club and the Odd Fellows, was a great man at the cricket-ground, and a person of some consideration at the vestry; in short, was the *beau idéal* of the young thriving country tradesman of thirty years ago.

He had not been married half a year before such an alteration took place as really would have seemed incredible. His dearest friends did not know him. The whole man was changed—shrunk, shrivelled, withered, dwindled into nothing. The hen-pecked husband in the farce, carrying his wife's clogs in one hand and her handbox in the other, and living on the "tough drumsticks of turkeys, and the fat flaps of shoulders of mutton," was but a type of him. The spirit of his youth was departed. He gave up attending the coffee-house or the cricket-ground, ceased to joke or to laugh at jokes; and he who had had at club and vestry "a voice potential as double as the *mayor's*," could hardly be brought to answer Yes or No to a customer. The man was evidently in an atrophy. His wife laid the blame to his smoking, and his friends laid it to his wife, whilst poor Simon smoked on and said nothing. It was a parallel case to Peter Jenkins's, and Stephen Lane might have saved him; but Stephen not being amongst his cronies, (for Simon was a Tory,) and Simon making no complaint, that chance was lost. He lingered through the first twelve months after their marriage, and early in the second he died, leaving his widow in excellent circumstances, the possessor of a flourishing business and the mother of a little boy, to whom she (the will having of course been made under her supervision) was constituted sole guardian.

Incredible as it may seem, considering the life she led him

while alive, Deborah was really sorry for poor Simon—perhaps from a touch of remorse, perhaps because she lost in him the most constant and patient listener to her various orations—perhaps from a mixture of both feelings; at all events, sorry she was; and as grief in her showed itself in the very novel form of gentleness, so that for four-and-twenty hours she scolded nobody, the people about her began to be seriously alarmed for her condition, and were about to call in the physician who had attended the defunct, to prescribe for the astounding placability of the widow, when something done or left undone, by the undertaker or his man, produced the effect which medical writers are pleased to call “an effort of nature;” she began to scold, and scolded all through the preparations for the funeral, and the funeral itself, and the succeeding ceremonies of will-reading, legacy-paying, bill-settling, stock-valuing, and so forth, with an energy and good-will and unwearying perseverance that left nothing to be feared on the score of her physical strength. John Wesley preaching four sermons, and Kean playing Richard three times in one day, might have envied her power of lungs. She could have spoken Lord Brougham’s famous six hours’ speech on the Law Reform without exhaustion or hoarseness. But what do I talk of a six hours’ speech? She could have spoken a whole night’s debate in her own single person, without let or pause, or once dropping her voice, till the division, so prodigious was her *sostenuto*. Matthews and Miss Kelly were nothing to her. And the exercise agreed with her—she throve upon it.

So for full twenty years after the death of Mr. Tomkins did she reign and scold in the dark, dingy, low-browed, well-accustomed shop of which she was now the sole directress. M. Pierre Leblanc continued to be her man of business; and as, besides his boasted philosophy, he added a little French pliancy and flattery of which he did not boast, and a great deal of dexterity in business and integrity, as well as clearness in his accounts, they got on together quite as well as could be expected. The trade flourished; for, to do Deborah justice, she was not only a good manager, in the lowest sense of the term—which, commonly speaking, means only frugal,—but she was, in the most liberal acceptation of the words, prudent, sagacious, and honest in her pecuniary dealings, buying the very best commodities, and selling them at such a fair and

moderate profit as ensured a continuation of the best custom of the county — the more especially as her sharp forbidding countenance and lank raw-boned figure were seldom seen in the shop. People said (but what will not people say?) that one reason for her keeping away from such excellent scolding-ground was to be found in *les doux yeux* of M. Pierre Leblanc, who, withered, wizened, broken-down cripple as he was, was actually suspected of having made an offer to his mistress; — a story which I wholly disbelieve, not only because I do not think that the poor philosopher, whose courage was rather of a passive than an active nature, would ever have summoned resolution to make such a proposal; but because he never, as far as I can discover, was observed in the neighbourhood with a scratched face — a catastrophe which would as certainly have followed the audacity in question, as the night follows the day. Moreover, it is bad philosophy to go hunting about for a remote and improbable cause, when a sufficient and likely one is close at hand; and there was, in immediate juxta-position with Mrs. Tomkins's shop, reason enough to keep her out of it to the end of time.

I have said that this shop, although spacious and not incommodious, was dark and low-browed, forming part of an old-fashioned irregular tenement, in an old-fashioned irregular street. The next house, with a sort of very deep and square bay-window, which was, by jutting out so as to overshadow it, in some sort the occasion of the gloom which, increased perhaps by the dingy nature of the commodities, did unquestionably exist in this great depository of cheese and chandlery-ware, happened to be occupied by a dealer in whalebone in its various uses, stays, umbrellas, parasols, and so forth, — a fair, mild, gentle Quakeress — a female Friend, with two or three fair smiling daughters, the very models of all that was quiet and peaceful, who, without even speaking to the furious virago, were a standing rebuke to that “perturbed spirit.” The deep bay-window was their constant dwelling-place. There they sat tranquilly working from morning to night, gliding in and out with a soft stealing pace like a cat, sleek, dimpled, and dove-eyed, with that indescribable nicety and purity of dress and person, and that blameless modesty of demeanour, for which the female Friend is so generally distinguished. Not a fault could Mrs. Tomkins discover in her next neigh-

bour, — but if ever woman hated her next neighbour, she hated Rachel May.

The constant sight of this object of her detestation was, of course, one of the evils of Mrs. Tomkins's prosperous life ; — but she had many others to fight with — most of them, of course, of her own seeking. What she would have done without a grievance, it is difficult to guess ; but she had so great a genius for making one out of everything and every person connected with her, that she was never at a loss in that particular. Her stepmother she had always regarded as a natural enemy ; and at her father's death, little as she, generally speaking, coveted money, she contrived to quarrel with her whole family upon the division of his property, chiefly on the score of an old japanned chest of drawers not worth ten shillings, which her brothers and sisters were too much of her own temper to relinquish.

Then her son, on whom she doted with a peevish, grumbling, fretful, discontented fondness that always took the turn of finding fault, was, as she used reproachfully to tell him, just like his father. The poor child, do what he would, could never please her. If he were well, she scolded ; if he were sick, she scolded ; if he were silent, she scolded ; if he talked, she scolded. She scolded if he laughed, and she scolded if he cried.

Then the people about her were grievances, of course, from Mr. Pierre Leblanc downward. She turned off her porter for apprehending a swindler, and gave away her yard-dog for barking away some thieves. There was no foreseeing what would displease her. She caused a beggar to be taken up for insulting her, because he, with his customary cant, blessed her good-humoured face ; and she complained to the mayor of the fine fellow Punch for the converse reason, because he stopped before her windows and mimicked her at her own door.

Then she met with a few calamities of which her temper was more remotely the cause ; — such as being dismissed from the dissenting congregation that she frequented, for making an over free use of the privilege which pious ladies sometimes assume of quarrelling with their acquaintance on spiritual grounds, and venting all manner of angry anathema for the

love of God ; an affront that drove her to church, the very next Sunday. Also, she got turned off by her political party in the heat of a contested election, for insulting friends and foes in the bitterness of her zeal, and thereby endangering the return of her favourite candidate. A provincial poet whose works she had abused, wrote a song in her dispraise ; and three attorneys brought actions against her for defamation.

These calamities notwithstanding, Deborah's life might for one-and-twenty years be accounted tolerably prosperous. At the end of that time, two misfortunes befel her nearly at once, — Pierre Leblanc died, and her son attained his majority.

"Mother !" said the young man, as they were dining together off a couple of ducks two days after the old shopman's funeral ; "Mother !" said John Tomkins, mustering up his courage, "I think I was one-and-twenty last Saturday."

"And what of that ?" replied Deborah, putting on her stormiest face ; "I'm mistress here, and mistress I'll continue : your father, poor simpleton that he was, was not fool enough to leave his house and business to an ignorant boy. The stock and trade are mine, sir, and shall be mine, in spite of all the undutiful sons in Christendom. One-and-twenty, forsooth ! What put that in your head, I wonder ? What do you mean by talking of one-and-twenty, sirrah ?"

"Only, mother," replied John meekly, "that though father left you the house and business, he left me three thousand pounds, which, by your prudent management, are now seven thousand ; and uncle William Ford, he left me the new Warren Farm ; and so, mother, I was thinking, with your good-will, to marry and settle."

"Marry !" exclaimed Mrs. Tomkins, too angry even to scold, — "marry !" and she laid down her knife and fork as if choking.

"Yes, mother !" rejoined John, taking courage from his mother's unexpected quietness, "Rachel May's pretty granddaughter Rebecca ; she is but half a Quaker, you know, for her mother was a Churchwoman : and so, with your good leave," — and smack went all that remained of the ducks in poor John's face ! an effort of nature that probably saved Deborah's life, and enabled her to give vent to an oration to which I have no power to do justice ; but of which the non-effect was so decided, that John and his pretty Quakeress were

married within a fortnight, and are now happily settled at the new Warren House ; whilst Mrs. Tomkins, having hired a good-humoured, good-looking, strapping Irishman of three-and-twenty, as her new foreman, is said to have it in contemplation, by way, as she says, of punishing her son, to make him, the aforesaid Irish foreman, successor to Simon Tomkins as well as to Pierre Leblanc, and is actually reported (though the fact seems incredible) to have become so amiable under the influence of the tender passion, as to have passed three days without scolding anybody in the house or out. The little God of Love is, to be sure, a powerful deity, especially when he comes somewhat out of season ; but this transition of character does seem to me too violent a change even for a romance, much more for this true history ; and I hold it no lack of charity to continue doubtful of Deborah's reformation till after the honeymoon.

THE YOUNG MARKET-WOMAN.

BELFORD is so populous a place, and the country round so thickly inhabited, that the Saturday's market is almost as well attended as an ordinary fair. So early as three or four o'clock in the morning, the heavy wagons (one with a capital set of bells) begin to pass our house, and increase in number — to say nothing of the admixture of other vehicles, from the humble donkey-cart to the smart gig, and hosts of horsemen and footpeople — until nine or ten, when there is some pause in the affluence of market folk till about one, when the lightened wains, laden, not with corn, but with rosy-cheeked country lasses, begin to show signs of travelling homeward, and continue passing at no very distant intervals until twilight. There is more traffic on our road in one single Saturday than on all the other days of the week put together. And if we feel the stirring movement of "market-day" so strongly in the country, it may be imagined how much it must enliven the town.

Saturday at noon is indeed the very time to see Belford, which in general has the fault, not uncommon in provincial

towns, of wanting bustle. The old market-place, always picturesque from its shape (an unequal triangle), its size, the diversified outline and irregular architecture of the houses, and the beautiful Gothic church by which it is terminated, is then all alive with the busy hum of traffic, the agricultural wealth and the agricultural population of the district. From the poor farmer with his load of corn, up to the rich mealman and the great proprietor, all the "landed interest" is there, mixed with jobbers and chapmen of every description, cattle-dealers, millers, brewers, maltsters, justices going to the bench, constables and overseers following to be sworn, carriers, carters, errand-boys, tradesmen, shopmen, apprentices, gentlemen's servants, and gentlemen in their own persons, mixed with all the riff-raff of the town, and all the sturdy beggars of the country, and all the noisy urchins of both.

Noise, indeed, is the prime characteristic of the Belford market-day — noise of every sort, from the heavy rumbling of so many loaded waggons over the paved market-place, to the crash of crockery-ware in the narrow passage of Princes'-street, as the stall is knocked down by the impetus of a cart full of turnips, or the squall of the passengers of the Southton caravan, upset by the irresistible momentum of the Hadley-mill team.

But the noisiest, and perhaps the prettiest places, were the piazza at the end of Saint Nicholas' church, appropriated by long usage to the female venders of fruit and vegetables, where certain old women, as well known to the *habitués* of the market as the church-tower, were wont to *flyte* at each other, and at their customers, with the genius for vituperation for which ladies of their profession have long been celebrated; and a detached spot called the Butter-market, at the back of the Market-place proper, where the more respectable basket-women, the daughters and wives of farmers, and the better order of the female peasantry, used to bring eggs, butter, and poultry for sale on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

A pretty and a diversified place was the Butter-market; for besides the commodities, dead and alive, brought by the honest countrywomen, a few stalls were set out with straw hats, and caps and ribbons, and other feminine gear, to tempt them in return; and here and there an urchin of the more careful sort would bring *his* basket of tame rabbits, or wood-pigeons, or

young ferrets, or squeaking guinea-pigs, or a nest of downy owls or gaping jackdaws, or cages of linnets and thrushes, to tempt the townsfolk. Nay, in the season, some thoughtful little maid of eight or ten would bring nosegays of early prim-roses or sweet violets, or wall-flowers, or stocks, to add a few pence to the family store.

A pleasant sight was the Butter-market, with its comely country wives, its modest lasses and neat children,—pleasant and cheerful, in spite of the din of so many women, buyers and sellers, all talking together, and the noise of turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, and guinea-pigs; but the pleasantest sight there was a young damsel famous for eggs and poultry, and modest beauty, known by the name of “pretty Bessy,”—but not a regular attendant of the market, her goods being in such request that she seldom had occasion to come so far, the families round, ourselves amongst the rest, dealing constantly with her.

We are persons of great regularity in our small affairs of every class, from the petty dealings of housekeeping to the larger commerce of acquaintanceship. The friends who have once planted us by their fireside, and made us feel as if at home there, can no more get rid of our occasional presence, than they could root out that other tenacious vegetable, the Jerusalem artichoke; even if they were to pull us up by the stalk and toss us over the wall (an experiment by the way, which, to do them justice, they have never tried), I do verily believe, that in the course of a few months we should spring up again in the very same place: and our tradespeople, trifling as is the advantage to be derived from our custom, may yet reckon upon it with equal certainty. They are, as it happens, civil, honest, and respectable, the first people in their line in the good town of Belford; but, were they otherwise, the circumstance would hardly affect our invincible constancy. The world is divided between the two great empires of habit and novelty; the young following pretty generally in the train of the new-fangled sovereign, whilst we of an elder generation adhere with similar fidelity to the *ancien régime*. I, especially, am the very bond-slave of habit—love old friends, old faces, old books, old scenery, old flowers, old associations of every sort and kind—nay, although a woman, and one not averse to that degree of decoration which belongs to the suitable and

the becoming, I even love old fashions and old clothes ; and can so little comprehend why we should tire of a thing because we have had it long, that, a favourite pelisse having become shabby, I this very day procured with some difficulty silk of the exact colour and shade, and, having ordered it to be made in direct conformity with the old pattern, shall have the satisfaction next Sunday of donning a new dress, which my neighbours, the shoemaker's wife and the baker's daughters, who have in their heads an absolute inventory of my apparel, will infallibly mistake for the old one.

After this striking instance, the courteous reader will have no difficulty in comprehending that the same "auld lang syne" feeling, which leads me to think no violets so fragrant as those which grow on a certain sunny bank in Kibes Lane, and no cherries so sweet as those from the great mayduke, on the south wall of our old garden, should also induce me to prefer before all oranges those which come from Mrs. Hollis's shop, at the corner of the churchyard — a shop which we have frequented ever since I knew what an orange was ; and, for the same reason, to rank before all the biscuits which ever were invented, a certain most seducing, thin, and crisp composition, as light as foam and as tasteless as spring water, the handiwork of Mrs. Purdy, of the market-place, in the good town of Belford ; as well as to place above all other poultry that which cackles in the baskets of "pretty Bessy." The oranges and biscuits are good in themselves, and so are the ducks and chickens ; but some of their superiority is undoubtedly to be ascribed to the partiality generated by habit.

Another of the persons with whom we had in our small way dealt longest, and whom we liked best, was old Matthew, the mat seller. As surely as February came, would Matthew present his bent person and withered though still ruddy face at our door, with the three rush mats which he knew that our cottage required ; and as surely did he receive the sum of fifteen shillings in return for his commodity, notwithstanding an occasional remonstrance from some flippant housemaid or domineering cook, who would endeavour to send him off with an assurance that his price was double that usually given, and that no mat ever made with rushes was or could be worth five shillings. "His honour always deals with me," was Matthew's mild response, and an appeal to the parlour never failed

to settle matters to his entire satisfaction. In point of fact, Matthew's mats were honestly worth the money ; and we enjoyed in this case the triple satisfaction of making a fair bargain, dealing with an old acquaintance, and relieving, in the best way — that of employment — the wants of age and of poverty : for, although Matthew's apparel was accurately clean and tidy, and his thin, wrinkled cheek as hale and ruddy as a summer apple, yet the countless patches on his various garments, and the spare, trembling figure, bent almost double and crippled with rheumatism, told a too legible story of infirmity and penury. Except on his annual visit with his merchandise, we never saw the good old mat maker ; nor did I even know where he resided, until the want of an additional mat for my greenhouse, towards the end of last April, induced me to make inquiry concerning his habitation.

I had no difficulty in obtaining a direction to his dwelling ; and found that, for a poor old mat maker, Matthew was a person of more consideration and note in our little world than I could have expected, being, in a word, one of the honestest, soberest, and most industrious men in the neighbourhood.

He lived, I found, in Barkham Dingle, a deep woodland dell, communicating with a large tract of unenclosed moors and commons in the next parish, convenient doubtless to Matthew, as affording the rushes of which his mats were constructed, as well as heath for brooms, of which he was said to have lately established a manufacture, and which were almost equally celebrated for durability and excellence with the articles that he had made for so many years. In Barkham Dingle lived old Matthew, with a grand-daughter, who was, I found, also renowned for industry and good-humour : and, one fine afternoon towards the end of April, I set forth in my little pony phaeton, driven by that model of all youthful serving-men, our boy John, to make my purchase.

Our road lay through a labyrinth of cross-country lanes, intermingled with tiny patches of village greens, where every here and there a score or two of sheep, the small flock of some petty farmer, were nestled with their young lambs among the golden gorse and the feathery broom, and which started up, bleating, at the sound of our wheels and the sight of Dash (far too well-bred a dog to dream of molesting them), as if our peaceful procession had really been something

to be frightened at. Rooks were wheeling over our heads wood-pigeons flying across the fields ; the shrill cry of the plover mixed with the sweet song of the nightingale and the monotonous call of the cuckoo ; whilst every hedge echoed with the thousand notes of the blackbird, the linnet, the thrush, and "all the finches of the grove." Geese and ducks, with their train of callow younglings, were dabbling in every pool ; little bands of straggling children were wandering through the lanes ; everything, in short, gave token of the loveliest of the seasons, the fresh and joyous spring. Vegetation, was, however, unusually backward. The blossom of the sloe, called by the country people "the blackthorn winter," still lingered in the hedges, mingling its snowy garlands with the deep, rich brown of the budding oak and the tender green of the elm ; the primroses of March still mingled with the cowslips, pansies, orchises, and wild hyacinths of April ; and the flower of the turnip was only just beginning to diffuse its honeyed odours (equal in fragrance to the balmy tassels of the lime) in the most sheltered nooks or the sunniest exposures. The "blessed sun" himself seemed rather bright than warm : the season was, in short, full three weeks backwarder than it should have been according to the almanack. Still it was spring, beautiful spring ! and, as we drew near to the old beech-wood called Barkham Dingle, we felt in its perfection all the charm of the scene and the hour.

Although the country immediately round was unenclosed, as had been fully proved by the last half-mile of undulating common, interspersed by old shaggy trees and patches (islets, as it were) of tangled underwood, as well as by a few rough ponies and small cows belonging to the country people ; yet the lanes leading to it had been intersected by frequent gates, from the last of which a pretty, little, rosy, smiling girl, to whom I had tossed a penny for opening it, had sprung across the common, like a fawn, to be ready with her services at that leading into the Dingle, down which a rude cart track, seldom used unless for the conveyance of fagots or brushwood, led by a picturesque but by no means easy descent.

Leaving chaise, and steed, and driver, to await our return at the gate, Dash and I pursued our way by a winding yet still precipitous path to the bottom of the dell. Nothing could be more beautiful than the scene. On every side, steep,

shelving banks, clothed with magnificent oaks and beeches, the growth of centuries, descended gradually, like some vast amphitheatre, to a clear, deep piece of water, lying like a mirror in the midst of the dark woods, and letting light and sunshine into the picture. The leaves of the beech were just bursting into a tender green from their shining sheaths, and the oaks bore still the rich brown, which of their unnumbered tints is perhaps the loveliest ; but every here and there a scattered horse-chestnut, or plane, or sycamore, had assumed its summer verdure ; the weeping birch, "the lady of the woods," was breaking from the bud, the holly glittering in its unvaried glossiness, the hawthorn and the briar rose in full leaf, and the ivy and woodbine twisting their bright wreaths over the rugged trunks of the gigantic forest-trees ; so that green formed even now the prevailing colour of the wood. The ground, indeed, was enamelled with flowers like a parterre. Primroses, cowslips, pansies, orchises, ground-ivy, and wild hyacinths, were blended in gorgeous profusion with the bright wood-vetch, the light wood-anemone, and the delicate wood-sorrel, which sprang from the mossy roots of the beeches, unrivalled in grace and beauty, more elegant even than the lily of the valley that grew by its side. Nothing could exceed the delightfulness of that winding wood-walk.

I soon came in sight of the place of my destination, a low-browed, thatched cottage, perched like a wild-duck's nest at the very edge of the pool, and surrounded by a little garden redeemed from the forest — a small *clearing*, where cultivated flowers, and beds of berry-bushes, and pear and cherry trees, in full blossom, contrasted strangely yet pleasantly with the wild scenery around.

The cottage was very small, yet it had the air of snugness and comfort which one loves to associate with the dwellings of the industrious peasantry. A goodly fagot-pile, a donkey-shed, and a pigsty, evidently inhabited, confirmed this impression ; and geese and ducks swimming in the water, and chickens straying about the door, added to the cheerfulness of the picture.

As I approached, I recognised an old acquaintance in a young girl, who, with a straw basket in her hand, was engaged in feeding the cocks and hens — no less a person than pretty Bessy the young market-woman, of whom I have before

spoken, celebrated for rearing the earliest ducks and the fattest and whitest chickens ever seen in these parts. Any Wednesday or Saturday morning, during the spring or summer, might Bessy be seen on the road to Belford, tripping along by the side of her little cart, hardly larger than a wheelbarrow, drawn by a sedate and venerable donkey, and laden with coops full of cackling or babbling inmates, together with baskets of fresh eggs — for Bessy's commodities were as much prized at the breakfast as at the dinner table. She meant, as I have said, to keep the market ; but, somehow or other, she seldom reached it ; the quality of her merchandise being held in such estimation by the families around, that her coops and baskets were generally emptied before they gained their place of destination.

Perhaps the popularity of the vender had something to do with the rapid sale of her poultry-ware. Never did any one more completely realise the *beau idéal* of a young, happy, innocent, country girl, than Matthew's grand-daughter. Fresh and fair, her rosy cheeks mantling with blushes, and her cherry lips breaking into smiles, she was the very milk-maid of Isaac Walton ; and there was an old-fashioned neatness and simplicity, a complete absence of all finery, in her attire, together with a modest sweetness in her round young voice, a rustic grace in her little curtsey, and, above all, a total unconsciousness of her charms, which not only heightened the effect, but deepened and strengthened the impression. No one that ever had seen them could forget Bessy's innocent smiles.

At present, however, the poor girl was evidently in no smiling mood ; and, as I was thridding with care and labour the labyrinths of an oak newly felled and partly barked, which lay across the path, to the great improvement of its picturesqueness (there are few objects that so much enhance the beauty of woodland scenery) and the equal augmentation of its difficulty, I could not help observing how agitated and pre-occupied the little damsel seemed. Her cheek had lost its colour, her step was faltering, and the trembling hand with which she was distributing the corn from her basket could hardly perform its task. Her head was turned anxiously towards the door, as if something important were going forward within the house ; and it was not until I was actually by her side, and called her by name, that she perceived me.

The afternoon, although bright and pleasant for the season, was one of those in which the sun sometimes amuses himself by playing at bopeep. The sky had become overcast shortly after I entered the Dingle, and, by the time I had surmounted the last tall jutting bare bough of the oak, some of the branches of which I was fain to scramble over and some to creep through, and had fairly reached the cottage door, a sudden shower was whistling through the trees with such violence as to render both Dash and myself very glad to accept Bessy's embarrassed invitation, and get under shelter from the pelting of the storm.

My entrance occasioned an immediate and somewhat awkward pause in a discussion that had been carried on, apparently with considerable warmth, between my good old host, Matthew, who, with a half-finished mat in his hand, was sitting in a low wicker chair on one side of the hearth, and a visiter, also of my acquaintance, who was standing against the window ; and, with the natural feeling of repugnance to such an intrusion, I had hardly taken the seat offered me by Bessy and given my commission to her grandfather, before I proposed to go away, saying that I saw they were busy, that the rain was nothing, that I had a carriage waiting, that I particularly wished to get home, and so forth—all the civil falsehoods, in short, with which, finding oneself *madame de trop*, one attempts to escape from an uncomfortable situation.

My excuses were, however, altogether useless. Bessy would not hear of my departure ; Farmer White, my fellow-visiter, assured me that the rain was coming down harder than ever ; and the old matmaker declared that, so far from my being in the way, all the world was welcome to hear what he had to say, and he had just been wishing for some discreet body to judge of the farmer's behaviour. And, the farmer professing himself willing that I should be made acquainted with the matter, and perfectly ready to abide by my opinion—provided it coincided with his own—I resumed my seat opposite to Matthew, whilst poor Bessy, blushing and ashamed, placed herself on a low stool in a corner of the little room, and began making friends with Dash.

“The long and short of the matter is, ma'am,” quoth old Matthew, “that Jem White—I dare say you know Jem ; he's a good lad and a 'dustrious—and my Bessy there—and

she's a good girl and a 'dustrious too, thof I say it that should not say it — have been keeping company, like, for these two years past ; and now, just as I thought they were going to marry and settle in the world, down comes his father, the farmer there, and wants him to marry another wench and be false-hearted to my girl."

" I never knew that he courted her, ma'am, till last night," interrupted the farmer.

" And who does he want Jem to marry ? " pursued the old man, warming as he went on. " Who but Farmer Brookes's fine daughter 'Gusta — Miss 'Gusta as they call her — who's just come back from Belford boarding-school, and goes about the country in her silks and her satins, with her veils and her fine worked bags, — who but she ! as if she was a lady born, like madam there ! Now, my Bessy —"

" I have not a word to say against Bessy," again interrupted the farmer ; " she's a good girl, and a pretty girl, and an industrious girl. I have not a word to say against Bessy. But the fact is, that I have had an offer of the Holm Farm for Jem, and therefore —"

" And a fine farmer's wife 'Gusta Brookes will make !" quoth the matmaker, interrupting Master White in his turn. " A pretty farmer's wife ! She that can do nothing on earth but jabber French, and read story-books, and thump on the music ! Now, there's my girl can milk, and churn, and bake, and brew, and cook, and wash, and make, and mend, and rear poultry — there are not such ducks and chickens as Bessy's for ten miles round. Ask madam — she always deals with Bessy, and so do all the gentlefolks between here and Belford."

" I am not saying a word against Bessy," replied Farmer White ; " she's a good girl, and a pretty girl, as I said before ; and I am very sorry for the whole affair. But the Holm Farm is a largish concern, and will take a good sum of money to stock it — more money than I can command ; and Augusta Brookes, besides what her father can do for her at his death, has four hundred pounds of her own left her by her grandmother, which, with what I can spare, will be about enough for the purpose ; and that made me think of the match, though the matter is still quite unsettled. You know, Master Matthew, one can't expect that Bessy, good girl as she is, should have any money —"

“Oh, that’s it!” exclaimed the old man of the mats. “You don’t object to the wench then, nor to her old grandfather, if ’twas not for the money?”

“Not in the least,” replied the farmer; “she’s a good girl, and a pretty girl. I like her full as well as Augusta Brookes, and I am afraid that Jem likes her much better. And, as for yourself, Master Matthew, why I’ve known you these fifty years, and never heard man, woman, or child speak a misword of you in my life. I respect you, man! And I am heartily sorry to vex you, and that good little girl yonder. Don’t cry so, Bessy; pray don’t cry!” And the good-natured farmer well-nigh cried for company.

“No, don’t cry, Bessy, because there’s no need,” rejoined her grandfather. “I thought mayhap it was out of pride that Farmer White would not suffer Jem to marry my little girl. But, since it’s only the money,” continued the old man, fumbling amidst a vast variety of well-patched garments, until from the pocket of some under-jacket he produced a greasy brown leather book—“since ’tis only Miss ’Gusta’s money that’s wanted to stock the Holm, why that’s but reasonable; and we’ll see whether your four hundred won’t go as far as hers. Look at them dirty bits of paper, farmer—they’re of the right sort, an’t they?” cried Matthew, with a chuckle. “I called ’em in, because I thought they’d be wanted for her portion, like; and, when the old matmaker dies, there’ll be a hundred or two more into the bargain. Take the money, man, can’t ye? and don’t look so ’stounded. It’s honestly come by, I promise you,—all ’dustury and ’conomy, like. Her father, he was ’dustrious, and he left her a bit; and her mother, she was ’dustrious too, and she left her a bit; and I, thof I should not say it, have been ’dustrious all my life; and she, poor thing, is more ’dustrious than any of us. Ay, that’s right. Give her a hearty kiss, man; and call in Jem—I’ll warrant he’s not far off—and we’ll fix the wedding day over a jug of home-brewed. And madam there,” pursued the happy old man, as with most sincere congratulations and good wishes I rose to depart, “madam there, who looks so pleased and speaks so kindly, may be sure of her mat. I’m a ’dustrious man, thof I say it that should not say it; and Bessy’s a ’dustrious girl; and, in my mind, there’s nothing beats ’dustury in high or in low.”

And, with this axiom from the old matmaker, Dash and I took our leave of four as happy people — for by this time Jem had joined the party — as could well be found under the sun.

HESTER.

AMONGST the most prominent of the Belfordians who figured at the Wednesday night's club at the King's Arms, was a certain portly personage, rather broader than he was long, who was known generally through the town by the familiar appellation of Nat Kinlay. By calling, Nat

“ Was, — could he help it ? — a special attorney ; ”

by habit and inclination, a thorough good fellow — played the best rubber, sang the best song, told the best story, made the best punch — and drank the most of it when made, of any man in Belford. Besides these accomplishments, he was eminently agreeable to men of all ranks ; had a pleasant word for everybody ; was friendly with the rich, generous to the poor, never out of spirits, never out of humour, and, in spite of the quips and cranks in which he delighted, never too clever for his company : the most popular person in the place was, beyond all doubt, Nat Kinlay.

In spite, however, of his universal popularity, and of a general tendency to overrate his colloquial talents, no attorney in the town had so little employment. His merits made against him in his profession almost as strongly as his faults : frank, liberal, open-hearted, and indulgent, as well as thoughtless, careless, daring, and idle ; a despiser of worldly wisdom, a hater of oppression, and a reconciler of strife — he was about the last person to whom the crafty, the overbearing, or the litigious, would resort for aid or counsel. The prudent were repelled by his heedlessness and procrastination, and the timid alarmed at his levity ; so that the circumstance which he told as a good joke at the club, of a spider having spun a web over the lock of his office-door (as over the poor-box in Hogarth's famous picture), was no uncommon occurrence at his resi-

dence. Except by a few of the poorest and wildest of his boon companions, — penniless clients, who lived at his table all the while their suits were pending, and took care to disappear just before their cause was lost, — the mysterious-looking brass knob, with “OFFICE-BELL” underneath it, at Mr. Kinlay’s excellent house in Queen Street, remained unringed from term to term.

Startling as such a circumstance would have seemed to most professional men, it was long before this total absence of profitable employment made the slightest impression on Nat Kinlay. The son of an affluent tradesman in a distant county, he had been articled to a solicitor, rather as a step in station, an advance towards gentility, than with any view to the money-making facilities of that lucrative calling. His father, judging from his own frugal habits, thought that Nat, the only child amongst a large family of wealthy brothers, would have money enough, without making himself a slave to the law; and when the early death of his parents put him in possession of thirty thousand pounds lawful money of Great Britain, besides the great draper’s shop in the little town of Cranley where that money had been accumulated, — to say nothing of the stock and good-will, and divers messuages and tenements, gardens and crofts, in and about the aforesaid town — Nat was most decidedly of the same opinion.

But, extravagant in every sense of the word, luxurious in his habits, prodigal in his generosity, expensive in his tastes, easy and uncalculating as a child, the thirty thousand pounds, between building and driving, and card-playing and good-fellowship — (for sporting he was too unwieldy and too idle, or that would undoubtedly have been added to the catalogue of the spendthrift’s sins,) the thirty thousand pounds melted away like snow in the sunshine; the produce of the shop, gardens, crofts, messuages, and tenements — even the humble dwelling in which his father had been born, and his grandfather had laid the foundation of the family prosperity in the humble vocation of a tailor, — disappeared with equal rapidity; and Nat Kinlay was on the very verge of ruin, when the death of a rich uncle relieved him from his difficulties, and enabled him to recommence his career of dissipation.

In the course of a few years his funds were again nearly exhausted, and again he was relieved by the bequest of a

dotting aunt, whom two of her brothers, indignant at the conduct of the hope of the house, had made their heiress; and the only lesson that her dutiful nephew drew from this second and near approach of poverty, was a vague confidence in his own good fortune, and that callousness to a particular danger which is the result of repeated escape from the same sort of peril. Good advice, which, of all valuable commodities, is the one most frequently wasted, was particularly thrown away in his case; he trusted in his lucky star — Napoleon himself not more implicitly — and replied to his friendly advisers only by a knowing wink, a good-humoured nod, and a scrap of some gay Anacreontic:

“Pleased, let us trifle life away,
And think of care when we grow old,”

might have been his motto.

This faith in his peculiar good fortune was not diminished in his own eyes, or in those of his flatterers, when, just as Aunt Dorothy's tens of thousands were going where so many tens of thousands had gone before, Nat had the happiness to secure the affections of a very amiable woman of considerable fortune, and far greater expectations, since she was the presumptive heiress of her mother's brother, with whom she had resided during the greater part of her life, and who was a man of ancient family and large landed property in the neighbourhood.

He, it is true, opposed the match as violently as a man well could do. His partialities and his prejudices were equally against such a connexion. His affection for his niece made him dread the misery which must follow a union with a confirmed spendthrift; and his own personal habits rendered him exceedingly averse to parting with one who had been for so many years his principal companion and friend. That a young woman educated by him in a stately retirement, immured amidst the splendid solitude of Cranley Park in the pursuits of art and of literature, should “abase her eyes” on a low-born and unlettered prodigal many years older than herself, without even the attraction of personal graces; that Elizabeth Chudleigh, the steadiest of the steady, the gravest of the grave, demure and pensive as a nun, should be in love with Nat Kinlay, — seemed to her uncle not merely monstrous, but impossible.

Such, however, was the case. And, perhaps many of the striking discrepancies that existed between them in character and situation tended to foster their mutual affection rather than to check its growth. To Nat, little accustomed to the best female society, the gentle reserve and quiet elegance of Elizabeth, accidentally thrown in his way at the house of a neighbouring gentleman, proved infinitely more captivating than the mere girlish prettiness, or the showy dashing vulgar style of beauty, with which he was familiar ; whilst she — Oh ! have we not all seen some sage and sedate damsel of six-and-twenty — staid, demure, and coy, as the prude of Pope's and Cibber's days — carried off her feet by the mere charm of a buoyant, merry, light-hearted rattle, thoughtless, generous, and good-natured ? Alas ! the tale is common. And the want of good looks in the hero of the present story (though his head was fine, and his figure at four or five-and-thirty was by no means so unsightly as it afterwards became,) was amply compensated by manners so agreeable, and a kindness so real, that personal beauty seemed as nothing in the comparison. There was a spice of romance in the affair too, — a horse that had run away, or had been like to run away, and had been stopped by the courage and address of the gentleman ; so poor Elizabeth said, and thought that he had saved her life. Could she do less than devote that life to his happiness ? And when he vowed that, with her for his companion and guide, he should never go astray again, could she do less than believe him ?

Accordingly, the lady being of age, her parents dead, and her own fortune absolutely in her power, they were married, with no other drawback to her happiness than the total and solemn renunciation of the kind uncle who had been to her as a parent. Nat indeed, with his usual sanguine spirit, made sure of his relenting ; but Elizabeth, better acquainted with the determined and somewhat stubborn temper which they had to encounter, felt a sad foreboding that the separation was final. She soon, however, forgot this evil in the bustle and excitement of the wedding excursion, and in the total alteration of scene and of habits which ensued upon their settling down into a married life.

One of the few stipulations which his fair bride had made was, that Nat should change his residence and resume his

profession. Accordingly, he bought the house and business of old John Grove, one of the most thriving practitioners that ever laid down the law in Belford, and soon became an eminent and popular denizen of the good town, where he passed his time much to his satisfaction, in furnishing and altering his already excellent house, throwing out bow-windows, sticking up verandas, adding to the coach-houses and stables, erecting a conservatory, and building a garden-wall. He took a pasture-farm about half-a-mile off, stocked it with cattle, built a fancy dairy, and bought a flock.

These were his graver extravagances, his business way of spending money. Society, or rather perhaps company in all varieties and degrees, formed his gayer mode of outlay. Parties at home and parties abroad, club-dinners and tavern-suppers, — meetings of all sorts and degrees, so that they ended in cards and jollity, from the patrician reunions of the hunt, to which his good songs, and good stories, and good humour gained him admittance, down to the pigeon-shooting matches at the Rose and Crown, of which he was the idol, — wine and billiards, whist and punch, — divided his days and nights amongst them; and poor Elizabeth soon found how truly her uncle had prophesied when he had told her, that to marry Nat Kinlay was to give herself to present care and future penury. She did not cease to love him; perhaps she would have suffered less if she had. Selfish, utterly and basely selfish, as he was in pursuing his own ignoble pleasures at the expense of his wife's happiness, there was still that about him which it was impossible to dislike — a sweet and merry temper, a constant kindness of look and of word, and a never-failing attention to procure everything which he even fancied could give her pleasure; so that Elizabeth, who, conscientiously refraining from every sort of personal expense, took care never to express the desires which he would be so sure to have gratified, often wondered how he could have divined her wishes and her tastes. No woman could dislike such a husband.

They had no child; but after they had been two or three years married, a beautiful little girl, about four years old, fair as alabaster, with shining ringlets of the texture and colour of undyed silk, made her appearance in Queen-street. They called her Hester; and Mrs. Kinlay said to those of her ac-

quaintance whom she thought entitled to an explanation, that the child was an orphan whom Mr. Kinlay had permitted her to adopt. It was observed that, once when she made this declaration before him, the tears stood in his eyes, and he caught up the little girl in seeming play, and buried his face in her silky curls to conceal his emotion. One or two of his old Cranley friends remembered, too, a vague story concerning a pretty country girl in that neighbourhood. She had died — and some had said that she had died in childbed, about four years before ; and her name had been Hetty. Be that as it might, the little Hester was firmly established in the house, the darling of the gay and jovial master, and perhaps even more decidedly the comfort of his mild and pensive wife.

Time wore on ; Hester was seven, eight, nine years old, and this, the fourth fortune that he had spent, began to wax low. Elizabeth's prudence had somewhat retarded the evil day, but poverty was fast approaching ; and, with all his confidence in his own good fortune, and in her uncle's relenting, even Nat began to be conscious of his situation. Of the forgiveness of her rich relation, indeed, she well knew that there was no hope. Bad news seldom fails to reach those most interested ; and she had heard from authority which she could not doubt, that the adoption of Hester had annihilated all chance of pardon. Severely strict in his own morals, the bringing home that motherless innocent seemed in his eyes a dereliction of feminine dignity, of wifely delicacy, — an encouragement of libertinism and vice, which nothing could induce him to tolerate. He was inexorable ; and Elizabeth, determined not to abandon the helpless child, loved her the better for the injustice of which she was the object.

In herself, Hester was singularly interesting. Surrounded by comforts and luxuries, and the object of constant and affectionate attention from both Mr. and Mrs. Kinlay, there was about her a touch of thoughtfulness and of melancholy, a mild and gentle pensiveness, not a little striking in so young a girl. Nat, when at home, spent more than half his time in playing with and caressing her ; but his jokes, usually so exhilarating, failed to enliven Hester : she smiled at them indeed, or rather she smiled at him with fond and innocent gratitude ; but no one ever remembered to have heard her laugh ; and to read, or rather devour, in the room which she was permitted

to call hers, whatever books she could come by, or to wander in the extensive and highly-cultivated garden with a beautiful Italian greyhound belonging to Mrs. Kinlay, or to ramble with the same graceful companion through the picturesque fields of the Dairy Farm, formed the lonely child's dearest amusements. Whether this unusual sadness proceeded from her being so entirely without companions of her own age, or was caught unconsciously from Mrs. Kinlay's evident depression, and from an intuitive perception, belonging to children of quick feeling, that beneath an outer show of gaiety all was not going well — or whether it were a mere accident of temperament, none could ascertain. Perhaps each of these causes might combine to form a manner most unusual at her age ; a manner so tender, so gentle, so diffident, so full of pleading sweetness, that it added incalculably to the effect of her soft and delicate beauty. Her look seemed to implore at once for love and for pity ; and hard must have been the heart that could resist such an appeal.

Every day increased Hester's sadness and Mrs. Kinlay's depression ; but the reckless gaiety of the master of the house suffered no diminution. True it was that his gaiety had changed its character. The buoyancy and light-heartedness had vanished ; even the confidence in his inalienable good fortune was sensibly lessened — it was not, however, gone. No longer expecting a pardon from his wife's offended kinsman, and not yet hardened enough to wish, or at least to confess to himself in the face of his own conscience that he wished for his death, he nevertheless allowed himself (so do we cheat our own souls) to think that, if he should die, either without a will, or with a will drawn up in a relenting mood, all would again go right, and he be once more prosperous and happy ; and, this train of ideas once admitted, he soon began to regard as a certainty the speedy death of a temperate and hale man of sixty, and the eventual softening of one of the most stern and stubborn hearts that ever beat in a human bosom. His own relations had forgiven him : — why should not his wife's ? They had died just as the money was urgently wanted : — why should not he ?

He was not, however, so thoroughly comfortable in this faith but that he followed the usual ways of a man going down in the world, spending more prodigally than ever to conceal

the approach of poverty, and speculating deeply and madly in hopes of retrieving his broken fortunes. He played higher at cards and billiards, bought brood-mares and merino flocks, took shares in canals and joint-stock companies ; and having in his prosperous days had the ill fortune to pick up at a country broker's a dirty, dingy landscape, which when cleaned turned out to be a Both (ever since which unlucky moment he had fancied himself a connoisseur), he filled his house with all the rubbish to be picked up in such receptacles of trash, whether in town or country,—Raphaels from Swallow-street, and Claudes from the Minorities.

These measures had at least the effect of shortening the grievous misery of suspense without hope, the lingering agony of waiting for ruin. Almost as soon as poor Nat knew the fact himself — perhaps even before — his creditors discovered that he was penniless, and that his debts far exceeded his assets ; a docket was struck, assignees appointed, the whole property given up (for Mrs. Kinlay, in her imprudent and hasty marriage, had neglected the precaution of having even a part of her own money settled upon herself), and the destitute family removed to London. Only a month before, Juliet, the graceful Italian greyhound, had died, and Hester had grieved (as older and wiser persons than Hester do grieve) over the loss of her pretty favourite ; but now, as for the last time she paced mournfully those garden walks where Juliet had so often gambolled at her side, and sat for the last time on the soft turf under the great mulberry-tree where they had so often played together, she felt that Juliet, lying peacefully in her quiet grave amidst a bed of the pure and fragrant rose unique, had escaped a great evil, and that, if it pleased God, she could be content to die too.

Still more did that feeling grow upon her on their removal to a dark and paltry lodging in a dreary suburb of that metropolis where every rank and degree, from the most wretched penury to the most splendid affluence, finds its appropriate home. A wretched home was theirs ;—small without comfort, noisy without cheerfulness, wanting even the charm of cleanliness or the solace of hope. Nat's spirits sank under the trial. Now, for the first time, he viewed before his eyes, he felt in his very heart's core, the miserable end of a life of pleasure ; and, when he looked around him and saw the two

beings whom he loved best on earth involved in the irremediable consequences of his extravagance ; condemned, for his fault, to sordid drudgery and squalid want ; punished, not merely in his own self-indulgent and luxurious habits, but in his fondest and purest affections,—his mind and body gave way under the shock ; he was seized with a dangerous illness, and, after lying for many weeks at the point of death, arose, weak as an infant, to suffer the pains and penalties of a premature old age, and that worst penalty of all—the will but not the power of exertion ! Oh, if he could but have called back one year of wasted strength, of abused intellect ! The wish was fruitless, in a worldly sense ; but his excellent wife wept tears of joy and sorrow over the sincere though tardy expiation.

She had again written to her uncle, and had received a harsh and brief reply : —“ Leave the husband who is unworthy of you, and the child—his child—whom his influence prevailed on you to adopt, and I consent to receive you to my heart and my dwelling ; but, never whilst you cling with a fond preference to these degrading connections—never, even if one should die, until you abandon both, will I assist you as a friend, or own you as a kinswoman.”

Mrs. Kinlay felt this letter to be final, and applied no more. Indeed, had she wished to address the obdurate writer, she knew not where to direct to him : for she ascertained from an old friend in the neighbourhood of Cranley that, a few weeks after the date of this letter, he left his beautiful residence, the seat of the family for many generations,—that the house was shut up, the servants discharged, and nothing known of the master beyond a vague report that he was gone abroad.

That hope over, they addressed themselves to the task of earning an humble living, and were fortunate enough to find an old friend, a solicitor of great practice and high character, who, although he had of late years shunned the prosperous prodigal, was most ready to assist the needy and repentant one. Nat, always quick, adroit, and neat-handed, had been in his youth a skilful engrosser ; and Mr. Osborne, finding on trial that he could depend upon him, not only employed him in his office when his failing health allowed him to leave the house, but trusted him with deeds to take home, in the completion and sometimes the entire execution of which Mrs.

Kinlay, applying herself to master the difficulties of the art, proved a most able and willing assistant. Hester, too, helped them and waited on them to the extent of her little power; and, once plunged into the healthful tide of virtuous industry and active exertion, the impoverished family found their sufferings greatly diminished. Even poor Nat, after a hard day's scrivening, felt his mind lightened and his conscience soothed. But this was a solace that became more and more rare; the attacks of disease pressed on him with increasing frequency and added severity, and Mrs. Kinlay and Hester were the chief bread-winners of the family.

In the mean while, all their property at Belford had been disposed of,—plate, china, linen, the superb collection of greenhouse and hothouse plants, the trumpery pictures and the handsome furniture; and, persons not otherwise unfeeling, had committed the common but unfeeling act of crowding emulously to the sale, and talking quietly over the ruin of the acquaintance whom, not a month before, they had visited and liked,—for not to like Mrs. Kinlay, under all the disadvantage of low spirits, was impossible. Even the dairy-house, with its pretty garniture of old china and Dutch tiles, was dismantled and sold off; a dividend was paid on the debts, and every trace of poor Nat was swept away from Belford; the house where he had resided, which had hung longest on hand, as being almost too expensive a residence for a town, having at last found a purchaser, who, if outward indications might be trusted, was as different as possible from its late jovial but unthrifty proprietor.

The new occupant, who took possession in the dusk of the evening and retired immediately to the back drawing-room, which had been fitted up for his reception, kept himself so close within his citadel, the garden and the apartments looking into it (the shutters of the front windows not being even opened), that the inhabitants of Queen Street, especially our friend Mrs. Colby, who lodged in one of a row of small houses nearly opposite, and kept a pretty keen look-out on her neighbours, particularly on a fresh arrival, began to think that they had been misinformed as to the sale of the house, and that a cross-looking old woman, and a strong homely country girl who seemed to officiate under her as a drudge, and might be seen every morning upon her knees scrubbing the steps before

the door, (those steps which no foot ever defiled !) were merely put in by the assignees to take care of the premises. Influenced by these suspicions, Mrs. Colby, who felt at once defrauded and affronted by not being able to answer the natural questions respecting her opposite neighbour, and not even knowing whether she had an opposite neighbour or not, took an opportunity one fine morning, when both the young and the old woman were at the door, the one at her usual scrubbery, the other taking in some butcher's meat, to inquire if their master were arrived. The poor lady took nothing by her motion ; the Cinderella-looking maid was stupid, and cried Anan ! the crone was surly, and banged the door in her face. No inquiry ever appeared more completely baffled ; and yet Mrs. Colby had pretty nearly satisfied herself as to the ostensible object of her question (*i. e.* whether the purchaser were arrived), having caught a glimpse in the tray (our friend Stephen Lane used to say that Mrs. Colby could see through a deal board) of some prime rump-steaks and a quarter of house-lamb, viands usually reserved for a master's table ; and having also discerned, standing a little back in the passage, as if cogitating the question " Shall I bark ? " a beautiful Italian greyhound, so closely resembling the deceased Juliet, who had been of Mrs. Colby's acquaintance, that if such a thing as the ghost of a dog had been ever heard of, and that shrewd and unimaginative lady had been a believer in the unprofitable mysteries of the Gothic superstition, the light and graceful little animal might have passed for an apparition.

A week, nay a month passed away, and still Mrs. Colby, although keeping constant watch, had not been fortunate enough to see the stranger. It would almost seem that he had returned her compliment, and kept watch over her goings, and comings likewise ; for twice at least, as she had the mortification to hear, he had gone out during the short time that she had been off guard ; once, as it appeared, to visit the nursery-garden, fresh stock the hothouses and greenhouses, and hire suitable gardeners ; the second time, to exchange his roomy and excellently situated pew in St. Stephen's church (in the fitting up of which poor Nat had spent much money), for a small niche in an obscure nook, which had no earthly recommendation but that of being close to a side-door at which the occupant might go out or come in without observa-

tion, and being so placed that it could be surmounted by a brass rod and a green curtain without causing annoyance or inconvenience to any one.

This last circumstance gave an insight into his character which every subsequent indication strengthened and confirmed. The man was evidently that plant of English growth called an oddity. He neither received nor returned visits, made no acquaintance, and seemed to have no associate in the world besides his cross housekeeper and his beautiful dog. Gradually he fell into the habit of going into the streets, and entering the shops to which business called him ; and then it was seen that he was a tall, erect, elderly gentleman, muscular and well proportioned, with a fine intellectual head, bald on the crown and forehead, and surrounded by short curly dark hair scarcely touched with grey, a fine intelligent countenance, and a general air of careless gentility — the air of one too sure of his station to take any thing like trouble in its assertion.

After a time he began to haunt the booksellers' shops, and showed himself a man well acquainted, not only with literature, but with bibliography, — a hunter after choice editions and a dear lover of that perhaps not very extensive class of scarce works which are valuable for other qualities besides their scarcity. In the old English drama particularly, and old ballads and romances in all languages, he was curious ; and his library would have formed as good a subject for a grand incremation, in the hands of the Curate and Barber, as that of Don Quixote himself, whom he also emulated in the liberality of his orders and his total regardlessness of expense.

Another of his haunts was the shop of an intelligent print-seller in the town, whom he employed in burnishing the frames and assisting him to hang a small but splendid collection of the finest Italian masters, — such pictures as it was sin and shame to shut up within doors more rigidly barred than those of a prison, inasmuch as none could find entrance ; and such as collectors — who, even the most tasteful, often find the pleasure their pictures afford to their own eyes not a little enhanced by their value in the eyes of others — are generally ready enough to display.

From the report made by the printseller of these magnificent paintings, and of the richness and tastefulness of the furniture, together with his large orders and punctual payments amongst

the different tradespeople of the town, a strong and probably exaggerated notion of the recluse's great wealth began to prevail amongst the genteel—that is to say, the idle circles of Belford, to whom, in the absence of individual occupation, any thing in the shape of mystery and news proved a welcome resource from the sameness and *ennui* of their general condition. During six months that he had been in the place, nothing more had been known of him than that his newspapers came addressed to Oliver Carlton, Esq. Beyond that, not a tittle of intelligence had Mrs. Colby been able to extract from the postman. He could not even tell her what the papers were; and she felt that it would somewhat have mitigated the fever of curiosity to know whether Mr. Carlton (if Carlton were indeed his name—if he were not rather some illustrious incognito) amused his solitude by the perusal of the Times or the Chronicle, the Standard, or the Courier. Then she could at least have guessed at his politics, have learnt to think of him as Whig or Tory. Now he was worse than the Veiled Prophet—the most provoking puzzle in existence!

This feeling was shared in no small degree by our friend King Harwood; for if curiosity ever were a female monopoly, (which, by the by, I have not the slightest intention of admitting,) that time has long since passed away, and this identical personage, Mr. King Harwood, was in himself a bright example of a man possessing as much inquisitiveness and impertinent curiosity as all the sex put together. He it was who proposed to Mrs. Colby to storm Mr. Carlton's castle severally, and see whether their united powers of observation could not elicit some circumstance that might tend to elucidate the mystery; and, after some hesitation, Mrs. Colby consented; she being armed with the fair pretence of charity, as one of the lady collectors of a penny society; whilst King had provided himself with a letter from a young clergyman, who was standing for an evening lectureship at a public institution in London, and had requested Earl Harwood to canvass any of the governors with whom he chanced to be acquainted, enclosing a list in which appeared the name of Oliver Carlton.

Furnished with this document, our friend the beau approached, though with some caution, the grand object of his curiosity—the Bluebeard's chamber of Queen-street. The point of admission had been regarded by both parties as a

question of considerable difficulty, "Not at home" being the regular answer to all visitors ; and our adventurer had determined to watch Mr. Carlton home to dinner, and walk boldly after him into the house ; a plan which was the more easily accomplished, as the milkman, happening to stop at the door at the same instant, favoured the manœuvre, by engaging the attention of the stupid maid, who answered her master's knock. What passed between them, we have no business to know. Mr. Harwood would not tell, and Mr. Carlton did not ; even Mrs. Colby's ingenuity could not extract more from the crest-fallen King, than that the interview had been short and decisive, (indeed, having been watching him from her window with Dr. Fenwick's stop-watch in her hand, she knew that the time which elapsed between his stealthy entrance and his rapid exit was exactly four minutes and forty-three seconds,) and that Mr. Carlton was a brute ! Upon which encouragement, Mrs. Colby forthwith took up the Society's documents and marched over the way herself—curious, perhaps, to know what sort of brute she might find him.

The lady was admitted without difficulty, and found herself, with a facility which she had not expected, and which put her a good deal out of her play, in the presence of Mr. Carlton, and compelled by his manner to plunge at once into the affairs of the charity. "A penny society !" exclaimed her host, with an expression of sarcasm which only a long habit of scorn can give to any lips ; "you come for a penny subscription ! Madam, I have just had the honour of a visit from a gentleman, who is, he tells me, called King—King, doubtless, of the Busybodies ! Do not compel me to tell a lady that she is well fitted to be their Queen."

And Mrs. Colby found it convenient to take up her papers and march off, as her luckless predecessor had done before her.

From this time Mr. Carlton continued inaccessible and unmolested, holding intercourse with none but the poor of the place, whom he relieved with great munificence and some caprice. He was evidently a man of fortune and education ; of retired and studious habits, of very good principles, and very bad temper (soured probably by some domestic calamity, for it is our English way to quarrel with the whole world if injured by one individual) ; and as the Belford people got used to his oddities, and ceased to watch his comings

and goings, and he, in his turn, came to regard the persons amongst whom he lived no more than the passing and unobserving crowds of London or Paris—those mighty streams of human life, amongst which an isolated individual is but as a drop of water in a great river,—his dislike to being seen insensibly wore away, and he walked in and out of his house as freely and quietly as his neighbours.

It was now more than four years since the Kinlays had left Belford, and little had been heard of them during their absence. Poor Nat, who, at his height of popularity, had won only the undesirable distinction of being liked, but not esteemed, even by the thoughtless, whilst by the sober-minded he was universally condemned, had been succeeded by another “good fellow” amongst the parties which he frequented, whose newer songs and fresher jokes had entirely effaced the memory of their old boon companion—such are the friendships of men of pleasure!—whilst his wife, though universally respected, had shrunk so completely from every sort of intimacy, that, amongst her many acquaintances, there was not one who lived with her upon more familiar terms than is implied by a polite interchange of visits. Well-wishers she had many, friends she had none; and almost the first tidings that were heard of her in Belford during those four years were, that she had returned there a widow; that her husband had died after a tedious illness; and that she herself, in a state of failing health and utter poverty, had arrived in the town, accompanied only by Hester, had taken a small lodging nearly opposite her own old house, and intended to support herself by needlework.

Why she chose for her place of abode a spot so well calculated to revive melancholy recollections, can be accounted for only on the principle which none can understand, but all have felt, that endears to us the scene of past sufferings. This was undoubtedly her chief reason; although she sometimes said to herself, with desperate calmness, “This is my parish, and I will not give the overseers the trouble of removing me in case I am compelled to apply to them.” Another cause for her fixing in Belford might be found in its being the residence of a favourite old servant, now a respectable mantuamaker in the town, who was likely to be useful to her in procuring employment, and to whom, in case of her own death

she could entrust the child of her pity and her love—her own dear Hester.

Through this attached old servant,—why did I say that she had no friend in Belford?—it was soon made known to the ladies of the place that Mrs. Kinlay declined all visiting and all assistance, but would be thankful for employment at her needle, at the customary rate of payment; and she and Hester (her zealous and most efficient assistant) were soon in full occupation; any interval in the supply of plain-work (always so precarious) being supplied by dresses or millinery, to begin or to finish, from the shop of their humble but faithful friend Mrs. Boyd.

Hester, for whom Mrs. Kinlay felt that she had sacrificed much, and whom she loved all the better for that sacrifice, was a most sweet and gentle creature. Tall of her age—slender and graceful, though rather with a bending willowy grace, than the erect deportment of the dancing-school,—with a profusion of curling hair darkened into the soft colour of the ripe hazel-nut, a skin fair and polished as that of the garden-lily, a high open forehead, a mild grey eye, and a cheek pale until she spoke or smiled, and then glowing with the very tint of the maiden-blush-rose: all this—and, above all this, that smile so full of tenderness and sweetness, and that timid manner, and that low and pleading voice, were irresistibly charming. And her mind was as charming as her person. Wholly unaccomplished, since for accomplishments she had had no time, she had yet had the great and solid advantage of the society of a refined and cultivated woman, who talked to her, not as a child to be instructed, but as a companion to whom she was pouring out the fulness of her own knowledge and information, and unlocking the stores of a memory rich, above all, in the highest poetry of our language. Even the drudgery of the quill, had had its use in Hester's education, first by forming her mind to habits of patient attention, and then by allowing her, when the mystery was conquered and the task of copying was become merely mechanical, long intervals for silent thought. So that, at little more than thirteen years of age, her reflective and somewhat imaginative character had the maturity of twenty; those circumstances of her situation which would be commonly called disadvantages having acted upon her mind as the wind and rain of March upon the

violet, strengthening the flower, and raising it into a richer tint and a more exceeding fragrance.

Her pleasure in returning to Belford, — “to the country,” as she fondly called it — was excessive. Accustomed to fresh air and clear sunny light, the closeness and gloom of London had seemed to double the labour to which she had been condemned; and to inhabit again a street on the very outskirts of the town, in which three minutes’ run would lead her through the by-lane she knew so well, into the beautiful meadows and pastures of the Dairy Farm, was a blessing for which she could never, she thought, be sufficiently grateful. A few “natural tears she shed” to the memory of her kind protector — her father, as she had been taught to call him; but for herself, and even for her dear mother (for “mother” was the fond name by which she had always been permitted to address Mrs. Kinlay), she was full of hope. “The air would restore that dear mother’s health, and *she* should be able to support them both — she was sure she should. Half an hour’s run in the fields and lanes in the early morning, or in the dusk of twilight, and a long, long ramble every Sunday afternoon, would make her strong enough for any exertion; she wished her dear mother would let her work only for one week without helping her — she was sure she could keep them both.” And as she said this, her sweet face gladdened and glowed with her earnestness, the sad expression vanished, and she looked as happy and as hopeful as she really felt.

Neither she nor Mrs. Kinlay had made any inquiry respecting their opposite neighbour, the occupier of the house where they had lived for so many years. Their landlady, a well-intentioned but very common person, was not of a class to tempt them into any communication on a subject so painful and so affecting; and Mrs. Boyd — who had lived with Mrs. Kinlay from childhood, had pressed her coming to Belford, and had engaged for her her present lodging, with a vague intimation that she thought the situation would be beneficial, and hoped her dear mistress would not object to its vicinity to her former dwelling — had never entered on the subject. Ten days had passed without their happening to see their misanthropic neighbour, when one bright autumn morning, (for it was early in October that they arrived in Queen-street,) Hester sitting at work at the open window, her landlady and Mrs.

Kinlay being both in the room, saw him issue from his own door followed by the beautiful Italian greyhound, and exclaimed at its resemblance to her own regretted pet, her faithful Juliet: "Never was such a likeness!" cried she; "look! dear mother! only look!"

"It's Mr. Carlton and his dog — Romeo, I think they call him," observed the landlady, advancing to the window.

"Romeo! how strange! my dog's name was Juliet," replied Hester. "Do, dearest mother, come and see how like this little dog is to her in all her pretty ways. See how he frisks round his master and jumps almost into his arms! Pray look!"

And turning round to demand still more earnestly Mrs. Kinlay's attention, she saw her leaning back in her chair pale and motionless, the needlework on which she had been employed fallen from her hands, and her whole appearance and attitude bespeaking her inability to speak or move. She had not fainted, and yet she seemed scarcely conscious of the caresses of poor Hester, or of her efforts to revive and rouse her. Her first articulate words were a desire to see Mrs. Boyd; and by the time she arrived, Mrs. Kinlay was sufficiently collected to send the anxious girl for a walk, whilst she conversed in private with their humble but faithful friend.

The result of this consultation was a long letter written by Mrs. Kinlay and despatched to the post-office by Mrs. Boyd; and, until the reply arrived on the second morning, an evident increase of illness and agitation on the part of the writer.

This reply consisted of a large packet, apparently, as Hester thought from a transient glance which she was too delicate to repeat, of her dear mother's own letter returned with two or three lines in the envelope. Whatever might be the contents, the effect was exquisitely painful! Inured as the unhappy lady had been to suffering, this stroke seemed the most severe of any; and Hester could scarcely repress the affectionate anxiety which prompted her twenty times a day to implore that this new grief might be confided to her. Some way or other she could not avoid connecting it in her own mind with Romeo and his master; she even thought that the name of Carlton came across her as a sound once familiar; she could not recall when she had heard it, or where — the trace on her memory was faint and indistinct as the recollec-

tion of a dream — but assuredly the name was not new to her. Again and again was she on the point of making some inquiry either of Mrs. Kinlay or of Mrs. Boyd ; but respect in the one instance and delicacy in the other — and, above all, the early and salutary habit of self-restraint — withheld her from touching on the subject. The only approach to it that she ventured was, a remark on the singular coincidence of name in the two dogs : “ Romeo and Juliet — surely it was strange ! ”

“ Both are common names for Italian greyhounds,” was Mrs. Kinlay’s quiet reply ; and nothing more passed between them.

In the mean while Christmas approached, and the invalid’s health became more and more precarious ; and their united labours (although liberally paid) became more and more inadequate to the additional expenses of winter and of sickness. Mrs. Kinlay, whose hoard of jewels and trinkets had been nearly exhausted by the long illness and the burial of her husband, now disposed even of her laces and linens, reserving nothing but mere necessities for herself and Hester, and a small but beautiful and valuable repeater — the last gift, as she said, of a dear friend.

This resource and Hester’s incessant labours kept them through the dark months ; for the poor child found that November, and December, and January could be dark even out of London : and the winter passed away unmarked by any occurrence, except the formation of a warm and lasting friendship between herself and Romeo. One day, by some strange accident, the graceful little creature, shy and timid as a fawn, had lost his master, missed him in some of the booksellers’ and printsellers’ shops that he frequented ; and when, after a fruitless search, he addressed himself in distress and perplexity to the task of finding his way home, he encountered a tribe of noisy urchins, the pests of the streets, ripe for mischief, who seeing the poor little animal panting and breathless for fear, surrounded it shouting, and hooting, hallooed their own curs upon it, chased it as if it had been a wild beast, and finally followed it up the street with the cry of “ A mad dog ! ”

In this plight, Hester, going to the chemist’s for medicine, met the worried and bewildered little creature, who on her

calling "Romeo!" came to her at once, and sprang into her arms; and little as the slight gentle girl seemed calculated to encounter the small mob of mischievous boys already emulating the hero of Hogarth's Progress of Cruelty, and promising candidates for a similar catastrophe; yet, strong in womanly scorn and righteous indignation, she succeeded in rescuing her trembling protégé, and kept his pursuers at bay until, still carrying him in her arms, she took refuge with her frightened charge in a respectable shop. There she sat down with him in her lap, and soothed and caressed him until his fear seemed lost in love and gratitude to his fair preserver. Dogs are great physiognomists,—that is admitted on all hands; they are also voice-fanciers; and Romeo showed his discrimination in both these points, by being never weary of looking at his new friend's sweet face, or of listening to her melodious tones. They were obliged to part, for Hester felt it a point of duty to return him as speedily as might be to the master who seemed to love nothing else in the world, and accordingly she took him to the door before he had been even missed; but from that moment an attachment of the warmest kind was established between them. Romeo loved Hester as the most grateful of all animals loves those who have served him*; and Hester loved Romeo with that still stronger and more delightful affection which a young and generous girl feels for one whom she has served.

Under the guidance of this sentiment, it was quite extraordinary, considering how little either party went out, that they should so often contrive to meet each other. Romeo watched for Hester, and Hester watched for Romeo. It was an innocent romance, a rare instance of a clandestine intercourse without guilt or shame. Whether Mr. Carlton knew of their meetings, never appeared. Mrs. Kinlay did, and felt a pleasure which few things now could give her when Romeo bounded up stairs with Hester to pay her a visit. Frugal as they were, denying themselves all but necessities, they could not resist the temptation of keeping a supply of the delicate biscuits which that choice and fragile race of dogs are known to prefer to any other food; and Romeo, however difficult to coax into eating at his own home, never refused the cates pre-

* Vide note at the end of the story.

pared for him by the fair hands of his new friends. It was a very singular and very genuine attachment.

The winter, although gloomy, had been mild; and even in the Christmas week Hester, who knew every dell where the starry primrose grew, and every hedge-row where the violet blossomed, had cheered the sick-room of Mrs. Kinlay by a nosegay of primroses; whilst during the whole of February she had contrived to find on southern banks, and in nooks sheltered from almost every wind, covered by withered grass or couching amongst short mossy turf, a few, and a very few, early violets; — for those sweet flowers know and obey their season, and although an occasional straggler, tempted by the mildness of the weather, may steal into day, yet the countless multitude, the mass of fragrant blossoms (unlike the primrose, which, provided not checked by frost, will cover the ground in mid-winter) reserves its simple beauty and its exquisite perfume for its own month of March. And now March had arrived — a March soft and genial as April; and Mrs. Kinlay appearing much revived by the beauty of the weather and the fresh impulse given to all nature by the breath of Spring, Hester was most anxious to win her into walking with her one fine Sunday as far as the pastures of the Dairy Farm, now let to an old milkman, who, churlish to all the world, but courteous to Hester, had extended to her, and to her alone, the privilege of gathering violets in his hedge-rows. The first day that she had attempted to revisit her old haunts, she had found the high boarded gate which separated the street from the lane — a by-lane running along the side of Mr. Carlton's premises, then winding between a double row of tall elms, and opening into the rich enclosures of the Dairy Farm — she had found the gate triply locked, and had been seen peeping wistfully through the barrier by Giles Cousins, the milkman aforesaid — who had, and not without having fairly earned the title, the reputation of being the veriest churl in Belford — in, as it seemed, the least auspicious moment that could have been chosen for such an encounter, inasmuch as he was in the very act of driving before him a small rabble of riotous boys whom he had caught breaking his fences in search of a gleaning of hazel-nuts. The young imps (some of that same band of ne'er-do-well urchins who subsequently signalled themselves in the attack on poor Romeo) resisted amain, screaming, and

shouting, and struggling in all manner of ways ; but Giles Cousins, armed with the long and powerful whip with which he was accustomed to gather together a tribe of unruly cows, was too many for the gentlemen. He drove them to the gate, unlocked it, and thrust them forth into the street. Hester was meekly turning away ; but the same strong hand that had thrust the rioters out so roughly, kindly seized the gentle girl, and drew her in !

“ Miss Hester ! to be sure it *is* Miss Hester ! and how she is grown ! Don’t you go, Miss ; pray don’t you go. You have a right, sure, to come here whenever you choose ; and so has Madam — I heard she was come to Belford ; and I’ll send you a key, to let yourself in as often as you like. The cows are as quiet as quiet can be ; and my dame will be glad to see you at the cottage — main glad she’ll be. It looks quite natural to see you here again.”

“ Poor thing !” thought he within himself, as he turned away from Hester’s tearful thanks ; “ poor thing ! she must have known hard usage up in London, if a kind word makes her cry. And such a pretty harmless creature as it is ! just as harmless-looking as when it was no higher than that dock.” (beginning to tug away at the strong-rooted weed) “ which Jack Timms ought to be ashamed of himself for not having pulled up, passing it as he does every day, night and morning, and being told of it six times a week into the bargain. Poor Miss Hester !” continued Giles, having by a manful haul succeeded in eradicating his tough and obstinate enemy, and letting his thoughts flow again into their kindly channel — “ poor Miss Hester ! I must get my mistress to send her a pat of butter now and then, and a few apples from the old orchard ; and we must manage to get her and madam to take a drop of milk night and morning. We shall never miss it ; and if we did miss it, it’s no more than we ought to do. I shall never forget how main kind poor madam was to my mistress and me when we lost our little Sally. To my mind, Miss Hester favours Sally — only she’s more delicate, like. We must send her the key and the apples, and manage about the milk.”

And, with a downright heartiness and honesty of kindness that Mrs. Kinlay could not resist, the affair of the milk, so great a comfort to an invalid, was managed ; and Mrs. Cousins being quite as grateful as her husband, and entertaining the

same fancy of Hester's resemblance to the child whom they had lost — the youngest and the favourite, — she had run to the Dairy-house to see them as often as she could ; though, so closely was she occupied, that this her brief half-hour's holiday occurred far too rarely for their wishes. Her last visit had been on that Sunday morning, when — in walking up the little path, that led from the gate to the house, between two borders thickly set with bunches of anemones of the rich red and purple, as vivid as those colours in old stained glass, the secret of producing which is said to be lost now-a-days (luckily Nature never loses *her* secrets), alternating with tufts of double primroses, and of the pretty plant called by the country people the milk-blossom, backed first by a row of stocks and wallflowers, and then by a taller range of gooseberry and currant bushes just stealing into leaf — and, finally, in arriving at the rustic porch where the sweetbriar was putting forth its first fragrant breath drawn out by the bright sunshine succeeding to a balmy shower, — Hester had felt in its fullest force the sweet influence of the sweetest of the seasons, and had determined, if possible, to persuade Mrs. Kinlay into partaking her enjoyment, so far at least as her strength would permit, by getting, if not to the dwelling itself, at least into some of the nearest meadows of the Dairy Farm.

At the outset of the walk, Hester found with delight that her experiment had succeeded beyond her expectation. The day was delicious — bright, sunny, breezy, — for the light and pleasant air, though still on the wintry side of the vernal equinox, was too mild and balmy to deserve the name of wind, — and her dear companion seemed to feel in its fullest extent the delightful exhilaration so finely described by Gray, who, of all the poets of his own somewhat artificial time, has best succeeded in bringing strikingly and vividly before us the commonest and most familiar feelings of our nature : —

“ See the wretch that long has tost
On the thorny bed of pain
At length repair his vigour lost,
And breathe and walk again ;
The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening paradise.”

*Unfinished Ode on the Pleasures arising from
Vicissitude.*—MASON'S *Life of Gray*.

The season and the scenery were alike in harmony with the

buoyant sensations of returning health. The glorious sun was careering in the deep blue sky, dappled by a thousand fleecy clouds which floated at a distance around the bright luminary without for a moment dimming his effulgence: the sunbeams glanced between the tall trees on the grassy margin of the lane, striking on the shining garlands of the holly and ivy with a sparkling radiance; glittering through the dark leaves of the bramble, as though each particular leaf were a pendant emerald; dwelling with a purplish flush on the young shoots of the woodbine; and illumining the tender green of the wintry mosses, and the pure hues of the pale primrose and the crimson-tipped daisy, with a mingled brilliancy and delicacy to which the most glowing colouring of Rubens or of Titian would be faint, dim, and spiritless. A slender brooklet danced sparkling by the roadside; young lambs were bleating in the meadows; the song-thrush and the blackbird were whistling in the hedgerows; the skylark was chanting overhead; and the whole scene, animate and inanimate, accorded with Mrs. Kinlay's profound and devout feeling of thankfulness to the Providence which, depriving her of artificial luxuries, had yet restored her to the enjoyment of the commonest but purest gifts bestowed on man — the ever-varying and never-cloying beauties of Nature.

She walked on in silence; beguiled, partly by the real charm of the scene and the hour — the shallow pool on the top of which the long grass went trailing — the vigorous and life-like look of the leafless elm, into which one might almost see the sap mounting — the long transparent sprays of the willow, seen between the eye and the sunbeams like rods of ruddy light — the stamped leaves of the budded cowslip — the long wreaths of ground-ivy mingling its brown foliage and purple flowers with the vivid reds and pinks of the wild geranium, and the snowy strawberry blossom lurking in the southern hedge; and partly by thoughts sweet yet mournful — the sweeter perhaps because mournful of friends who had trodden with her that very path in bygone years, of all that she had felt and all that she had suffered in those quiet scenes; — when, after passing a bit of neglected wild plantation, where the tender green of the young larch contrasted with the dark and dusky hue of the Scotch fir, and the brown sheaths of the horse-chestnut just bursting into leaf; where the yellow flowers

of the feathery broom mingled with the deeper gold of the richly scented furze, and the earth was carpeted with primroses springing amidst layers of dropped fir-cones ;—after passing this wild yet picturesque bit of scenery, which brought still more fully to recollection the faulty but kindly person by whom the little wood had been planned, she became suddenly exhausted, and was glad to sit down to rest on the trunk of a large beech newly cut by the side of the lane, whilst Hester passed into an adjacent field to fill her basket with the violets, whose exquisite odour, drawn out by the sun, penetrated through the hedge and perfumed the sheltered retreat which she had chosen. She sank into her lowly seat with a placid smile, and dismissed her young and affectionate companion to her pleasant labour, with a charge not to hurry—to ramble where she liked, and enjoy the beauty of the flowers, and the summer-like feeling of the light and fragrant air.

And Hester, as she bounded like a fawn into those sunny meadows, abandoned herself to a fulness of enjoyment such as for many years the poor child, surrounded by distress and difficulty, and thoughtful far beyond her years, had not experienced. Every sense was gratified. The sunshine, the flowers, the hum of insects, the song of birds, the delicious breath of spring, and, more than all, that feeling—to her so rare, the unwonted sense of liberty ! Well sings the old Scottish poet—

“ Ah ! freedom is a noble thing !
Freedom makes man to have liking !
Freedom all solace to man gives :
He lives at ease that freely lives.”

BAREOUR — *The Bruce*.

And Hester tripped along the meadow as light as the yellow butterfly brought into life by that warm sunshine, and as busy as the bee wandering from blossom to blossom. It was a lawn-like series of old pastures, divided by deep ditches, fringed by two or three of the wild irregular plantations, edged by shaggy bits of mossy paling, which I have attempted to describe ; and dotted about by little islands of fine timber trees and coppice-like underwood, the reliques of hedgerows now long cut down, breaking and almost concealing the massy buildings, the towers, and spires of the town. One short bank, crowned by high elms, projected a little way into the pastures like some woody headland, at right angles from the hedge under which she was walking ; the hedge being thickly set with white violets, those

“pretty daughters of the earth and sun,” whilst, all around the lofty elms, the very ground was coloured by the deep purple which forms, perhaps, the sweetest variety of that sweetest of plants. In the hedgerow, too, were primroses yellow and lilac and white, all the tints commonly known blossoming under the pearly buds of the blackthorn, those “locked buttons on the gemmed trees ;” and Hester, as she stooped to fill her basket, first mused gravely on a problem which has posed wiser heads than hers, — the mystery, — still unexplained, of the colouring of flowers — and then, with a natural transition, applied herself to recollecting the different epithets given to these blossoms of spring by the greatest of poets ; for Hester loved poetry with an intensity which might be said to have partly formed her character, and to hear Mrs. Kinlay read Shakspeare, or recite some of the stirring lyrics of his contemporaries, had been the chief solace of her monotonous labours.

“ ‘ Pale primrose ! ’ ” said Hester to herself, — “ ‘ upon faint primrose beds ’ ” — “ ‘ violets dim ’ ” — “ ‘ the nodding violet ’ ” — What pictures ! and how often he returns to them, so beautifully, and so fondly ! surely he must have loved them ! And he speaks of the robin-redbreast, too ! ” added she, as, startled by her gentle movements, the hen-bird flew from her careless mossy nest in a stump of hawthorn, exhibiting her five pale eggs with red spots, to one who would not have harmed them for the fee-simple of Belford. She passed on rapidly, yet cautiously, that the frightened bird might the sooner return to her charge ; and arriving under the clump of elms, was amused by another set of nest-builders, those pugnacious birds the rooks, who had a colony overhead, and were fighting for each other’s clumsy stick-mansions, as if they had been the cleverest architects that ever wore feathers. The sight of these black gentlefolks made a change in the current of Hester’s poetical recollections, and she began “crooning” over to herself the elegant and pathetic ballad of “The Three Ravens,” one of those simple and tender effusions which have floated down the stream of time, leaving the author still unguessed. Then, by some unperceived link of association, her mind drifted to another anonymous ditty of a still earlier age, the true and pleasant satire called “Sir Penny ;” and when she had done with “that little round knave,” she by an easy transition began reciting the fine poem entitled “The Soul’s

Errand," and attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh ; and had just arrived at the stanza —

“ Tell fortune of her blindness,
Tell nature of decay,
Tell friendship of unkindness,
Tell justice of delay ;
And if they will reply,
Then give them all the lie ; ”

when she was aware of footsteps passing along the adjoining lane, and little Romeo, creeping through the thick hedge, flung himself into her arms.

During her poetical quotations she had gathered even to satiety from the purple bank, and had returned to the hedge-row near the gate for the purpose of collecting the white violets which grew there in profusion ; so that she was now nearly opposite the point where she had left Mrs. Kinlay, and was the unintentional auditress of a conversation which cleared at once the mystery that had hitherto hung over Mr. Carlton.

The first sentence that she heard rooted Hester to the spot. He seemed to have passed, or to have intended passing, and to have returned on some unexplained but uncontrollable impulse. His voice was at first low and calm — studiously calm, though not unkind, but became impassioned as he proceeded : —

“ Elizabeth ! No, do not rise ! Sit down again, I entreat you. You are not well enough to stand. You must have been very ill.”

“ I have been very ill.”

“ Ay, you are greatly altered. We are both greatly altered. You have suffered much ? ”

“ Oh, very much ! ”

“ Yes ! we have both suffered ! I am no man for general acquaintance, or for the slight and trivial companionship which this selfish bustling world dignifies with the name of friendship. I lived, as you know, in my books, and in the one solitary tie which still connected me with the world. Fatherless and motherless, the only child of my only sister, you were to me, Elizabeth, as my own daughter — endeared to me by the cares of twenty years, by habit, by kindred, and by taste. And when you, whom I loved as a daughter, whom I trusted as a friend, — when you abandoned me for one so unworthy ” —

“ He is dead. I beseech you, spare his memory ! He was

kind to me — I loved him ! For my sake, for your own, spare his memory ! — You would not wish to see me die here before your eyes !”

“ When for *him*, then — being such as he was — you deserted me, it seemed as if the earth were sinking under my feet, as if the sun were extinguished in the heavens ; books ceased to interest me — my food did not nourish, my sleep did not refresh me — my blood was turned to gall ; I vowed never to see, to pardon, or to succour you (for well I knew that you would soon want succour), whilst you remained with him, and acted under his guidance ; and heartsick and miserable, I left the home in which we had been so happy, to wander over the world in search of the peace and oblivion which I failed to find : and then, under some strange and moody influence, I settled here, in the spot that I should most have avoided, to feed my spirit full with bitter recollections. Elizabeth, those tears and sobs seem to respond to my feelings. They seem to say, that on your part also the old and holy love of near kindred and long association is not quite forgotten ? ”

“ Oh, never ! never ! ”

“ Why not then accede to my condition — my single condition, and return with me to the beautiful and deserted home of our common ancestors, its heiress, and its mistress ? Come with me, my dearest niece, and be, as you once were, my companion, my almoner, my friend ! Come with me, as the comfort and solace of my old age, and find health and happiness in the abode of your youth ! Why should you hesitate ? ”

“ I do not hesitate.”

“ It is but to dismiss *his* daughter — the illegitimate offspring of a low and licentious passion — one whom it was an insult to bring into contact with his pure and chaste wife ! ”

“ One who is herself all that is pure and innocent, and gentle and good ! I do not defend my own conduct. In abandoning you, my more than father, I deserved all punishment. Grievously as I have suffered, I have felt the chastisement to be merited. But if I were to desert this orphan child — *his* orphan — the grateful, tender child who has shared all my sorrows, has nursed me in sickness, has worked for me in health ; if I were, for any worldly good — even for that best of all blessings, your affection — to cast her friendless and

helpless upon the world, — I should never know another quiet moment — I should sink under grief and remorse ! What would become of her, growing as she is into such elegant, such exquisite beauty, and with a mind pure, graceful, and delicate as her person ? What would be her fate ? Her mother has long been dead. She has no kindred, no natural friend — none but myself, poor, feeble, helpless, sick, and dying as I am ; but, while I live, I will never abandon her — never ! never ! It breaks my heart to part now from you. But I cannot desert my Hester ; as you have felt for me, so do I feel for her. Do not ask me to abandon the child of my love ?”

“ I ask nothing. I offer you the choice between her and me. I am rich, Elizabeth ; my large estates have accumulated, during your long absence, until I can hardly count my own riches ; and you are poor — grievously poor ; — think before you decide.”

“ I have decided. Poor I am — grievously poor ; — but in giving up your affection, I resign more than riches. I have decided — I have chosen — I do not hesitate. But say, Good b’ye ! Bid God bless me ! Do not leave me in unkindness. Speak to me before you go, or you will break my heart. Speak to me, if only one word !”

“ Farewell, Elizabeth ! May you be happier than I shall be !”

“ Oh, God bless you ! God for ever bless you, my best and earliest friend !”

And then Hester heard Mr. Carlton move slowly away — she felt rather than heard that he turned away ; and Mrs. Kinlay remained weeping bitterly. Hester was glad to hear her sobs. She herself could not cry. Something rose in her throat, and she felt as if it would suffocate her — but she could not cry. She lay upon the ground lost in thought, with her little basket by her side, and Romeo still in her arms, until he sprang from her at his master’s call, oversetting her violets in his haste : and then she roused herself, and rose from the bank on which she had been lying, picked up her scattered flowers, and walked with a strange calmness to the other end of the field, that, if Mrs. Kinlay should seek her, she might not be led to suspect that she had overheard the conversation. And by the time Mrs. Kinlay did join her, each was sufficiently composed to conceal her misery from the other.

On the Friday of the ensuing week, a low and timid knock was heard just before sunset at the house of Mr. Carlton ; and on opening the door, the housekeeper was at once astonished and perplexed to discover Hester, who inquired gently and firmly if she could see her master ; and who, on his passing accidentally through the hall, settled the question herself, by advancing with a mixture of decision and modesty, and requesting to speak with him. Perplexed even more than his wondering housekeeper, he yet found it impossible to repulse the innocent child ; and leading the way into the nearest room, he sat down on the first chair, and motioned for her to be seated also.

It happened that this room was the one in which Mrs. Kinlay had principally lived, and where Hester had passed the happiest days of her childhood. The windows opened on the pretty velvet lawn on which stood the great mulberry tree ; and her own particular garden, the flower-bed that was called hers, and sowed and planted by her own hands under Mrs. Kinlay's direction, was right before her, glowing with the golden jonquil, and the crisp curled hyacinth — the choicest flowers of the season. There too, on that short soft turf where she had so often played with her own fond and faithful dog, lay the equally fond and faithful Romeo, basking in the last rays of the setting sun. The full tide of sad and tender recollection gushed upon her heart ; the firmness which she had summoned for the occasion deserted her, her lip quivered, and she burst into tears.

Stern and misanthropic though he were, Mr. Carlton was not only a man, but a gentleman, by birth, education, and habit ; and could not see female tears, especially in his own house, and caused, as he could not but suspect, by himself, without feeling more discomposed than he would have cared to acknowledge. He called immediately for water, for wine, for reviving essences, and himself administered a plentiful aspersion of *eau de Cologne*, and loosened the strings of her cottage bonnet.

Whilst so engaged, he could not help dwelling on her exquisite and delicate beauty. "How like a lily !" was the thought that passed through his mind as he gazed on the fair broad forehead, with its profusion of pale brown ringlets hanging down on either side ; the soft dovelike eyes, the

pencilled brows, and the long lashes from which the tears dropped on the polished cheeks; the fine carving of the youthful features, the classical turn of the swan-like neck, the pliant grace of the slender figure, the elegant moulding of those trembling hands with their long ivory fingers; and, above all, the mixture of sweetness and intelligence, of gentleness and purity, by which, even in her present desolation, the orphan girl was so eminently distinguished. She still wore mourning for Mr. Kinlay; and the colour of her dress, though of the simplest form and the commonest material, added to the resplendent fairness of her complexion: — “How like a lily! how elegant! how ladylike! how pure!” was the thought that clung to Mr. Carlton; and when, recovering her calmness by a strong effort, Hester raised her eyes to the person whom she feared most in the world, she met his fixed on her with a look of kindness which she did not think those stern features could have worn.

Her first words banished the unwonted softness, and recalled all the haughtiness of his common expression.

“I beg you to forgive me, sir, for having been so foolish as to cry and to occasion you this trouble. But I could not help it. This room brought to my mind so many past scenes of joy and sorrow, and so many friends that I shall never see again — dear, dear Mrs. Kinlay! — and my poor father! it seems but yesterday that he was sitting by the fireside just where you do now, with me upon his knee, talking so gaily and so kindly! And to think that he is dead, and how he died!” — And Hester turned away and wept without restraint.

She was aroused from her grief by the stern interrogatory of Mr. Carlton: “I understood that you desired to speak to me?”

“I did so, sir,” was the reply; “but this strange foolishness!” — and for a moment Hester paused. She resumed, however, almost instantly; her sweet voice at first a little faltering, but acquiring strength as she proceeded in her story, which Mr. Carlton heard in attentive silence.

“I did take the liberty of asking to speak with you, sir, that I might confess to you, what perhaps you may think wrong, that being within hearing last Sunday of your conversation with Mrs. Kinlay, I remained an undetected listener to that which was certainly not meant by either party for my

knowledge. I was accidentally on the other side of the hedge gathering violets ; and I suppose — I dare say — that I ought to have come into the lane. But I could not move ; I was as if spell-bound to the place. What you said, and what she said explained to me things that had puzzled me all my life long. Though taught to call him father, — and a kind father he was to me ! — and her mother — such a mother as never poor girl was blest with ! — I yet knew, I cannot tell how, that I was not their rightful child ; I used to think that I was some poor orphan — such as indeed I am ! — whom their kindness had adopted. But that which I really was, I never suspected, — far less that I had been the means of separating my benefactress from such a kinsman — such a friend ! When I heard *that*, and remembered all her goodness and all her sufferings, I thought my very heart would have broken ! She did not say a word to me, nor I to her. She does not know that I overheard the conversation ; but all the evening she was so sad, and so ill — so very, very ill ! Oh, if you could but have seen her pale face and have heard how she sighed ! I could not bear it ; so as soon as it was light I slipped out of the house, and ran up to the Dairy Farm to consult Giles Cousins and his dame, who have been very kind to me, and who would, I knew, prevent my acting wrongly when I most wished to do right, as a young girl without the advice of her elders might do. They both agreed with me, that it was my plain duty to remove the cause of discord between two such near and dear relations by going to service ; and happily, providentially, Mrs. Cousins's sister, who is cook in a clergyman's family, had written to her to look out for some young person to wait on her mistress's two little girls, walk out with them, and teach them to read and spell. Mrs. Cousins wrote immediately, and all is settled. Her husband — oh, how kind they have been ! — her good generous husband has advanced the money wanting for the journey and some needful trifles, and won't hear of my paying him out of my wages : — but God will reward him !” pursued poor Hester, again bursting into grateful tears : “ God only can reward such goodness ! He is even going with me to the very house. I sleep to-night at the Dairy Farm, and we set off to-morrow morning ; — Mrs. Kinlay, who knows nothing of my intentions, imagining only that I am going to assist Mrs. Cousins in some needlework.

Oh, what a thing it was to see her for the last time, and not to dare to say farewell ! or to ask her to bless me ; or to pray for her on my bended knees, and bid God bless her for her goodness to the poor orphan. What a thing to part from such a friend for ever, as if we were to meet to-morrow ! But it is right, I am sure that it is right — my own internal feelings tell me so. And you must go to her before she misses me, and bring her home to your house ; and in the full happiness of such a reconciliation, smaller sorrows will be lost. And you must tell her that I shall be very comfortable, very safe, for I am going to good people, with whom it will by my own fault if I do wrong ; and that in knowing her to be happy, I shall find happiness. Will you condescend, sir, to tell her this ? and to pardon me for this intrusion ? I could not steal away like a thief — I could not write, for I tried ; and besides, there was only you that could comfort Mrs. Kinlay for the loss of one to whom she has been as kind as if she were her born daughter. O, sir, tell her, I beseech you, that the poor Hester is not ungrateful ! If I leave her, it is from the truest and strongest affection,” said poor Hester, unconsciously clasping her fair hands. “ It is,” added she, taking up a volume which lay open on the table, and which even in her emotion and excitement had caught the eye of the verse-loving girl — “ It is on the principle of these beautiful lines : —

“ I could not love thee, dear, so well,
Loved I not honour more ! ”

Tell her this, I entreat you ! Tell her ”——

“ I shall not tell her a word of this, Hester,” interrupted Mr. Carlton, taking her hand and drawing her kindly towards him, — “ not a single word ! But you must tell me one thing, must answer me one question : — You that seem to have a taste for the rough and the crabbed — a talent for softening the veriest churls, — do you think now in your little heart that you can ever like me half as well as Giles Cousins ? ”

“ Oh, sir ! ” ejaculated Hester hopefully, yet doubtingly.

“ Can you forgive me ? ” added Mr. Carlton more seriously ; “ can you pardon the foolish and wicked prejudice for which I can never forgive myself ? I believe that you can, and that you will : and instead of setting off to this place of yours to-morrow morning, we must send your good friend Giles to

make your excuses ; and you must make my peace with Elizabeth, and we must all go together to Cranley Park. And here is Romeo knocking to be let in, and jumping and skipping as if he were conscious that his best friend was come home. I must give Romeo to you, Hester ; for he has given you the best part of him, that loving heart of his, long ago. And now, my dear little faithful girl, we must go to poor Elizabeth. To think of her having taught you to love the poetry of Richard Lovelace !”

Six weeks after this interview, Hester and Romeo, two of the happiest creatures in existence, were tripping gaily along a pathway which led from the fine mansion of Cranley Hall to a beautiful cottage at the edge of the picturesque and richly wooded park. It was the day famous for the ancient sports and customs of England — the lovely May-day ; and the green earth and brilliant sky, the light air and the bright sunshine, were such as to realise the most enchanting descriptions of the old poets. The young grass was studded with cowslips, and cuckoo-flowers, and the enamelled wild hyacinth ; and the thickets no less richly set with the fragile wood-anemone, the elegant wood-sorrel, the brightly-coloured wood-vetch, and the fragrant wood-roof. The bright green beeches with their grey and shining bark, and the rich brown foliage and rugged trunks of the oaks, set off the old magnificent thorns, whose long garlands of pearly blossoms scented the very air ; huge horse-chestnuts, with their pyramidal flowers, were dispersed amongst the chase-like woodlands ; and two or three wild cherries, of the size and growth of forest-trees, flung their snowy blossoms across the deep blue sky. A magnificent piece of water, almost a lake, reflected the beautiful scenery by which it was surrounded, — the shores broken into woody capes and lawny bays, in which the dappled deer lay basking, listening, as it seemed, to the concert of nightingales, whose clear melody filled the air.

All spoke of affluence, of taste, of innocent enjoyment. To breathe that fragrant air, to gaze on that lovely landscape, was to Hester unmingled happiness. She bounded on gay as the pretty favourite who frolicked around her, her sweet face radiant with pleasure, and her melodious voice bursting into spontaneous quotations of the thousand exquisite verses which the spring-loving poets, from Chaucer to Milton, have consecrated to the merry month of May.

One chant of the season particularly haunted her, and *would* not go out of her head, although she repeated it over and over purely to get rid of it, — the charming little poem from “The Paradise of Dainty Devices,” of which this is the burden : —

“ When May is gone, of all the year
The pleasant time is past.”

Now it was with this burden that Hester quarrelled.

“ ‘ When May is gone, of all the year
The pleasant time is past,’ ”

quoth Hester. — “ But that is a story, is it not, Romeo ? ” added she : “ at least, I am sure it cannot be true at Cranley ; for June will have roses and lilies, and strawberries, and hay-making,” continued Hester. And then relapsing into her ditty,

“ ‘ May makes the cheerful hue — ’

“ I won’t think of that pretty story-telling song, — shall I Romeo ? June will have roses and lilies ; July will have jessamine and myrtle,” said Hester. And then again the strain came across her —

“ ‘ May pricketh tender hearts,
Their warbling notes to tune.
Full strange it is — ’

“ There is nothing so strange as the way in which these lines haunt me,” pursued poor Hester : —

“ ‘ When May is gone, of all the year
The pleasant time is past.’ ”

“ One would think,” added she to herself, “ that I was spell-bound, to go on repeating these verses, which, pretty as they are, have no truth in them ; for at Cranley all times and all seasons, spring, summer, autumn, winter, must be pleasant. O what a sweet place it is ! and what happiness to live here with dear, dear Mrs. Kinlay, and dear Mr. Carlton ! and to see her so well and cheerful, and him so considerate and kind ! — so very kind ! Oh, how can I ever be sufficiently thankful for such blessings ! ” thought Hester to herself, pausing and clasping her hands, while the tears ran gently down her fair cheeks in the energy of her tender gratitude ; and the May-day verses were effectually banished from her mind by the stronger im-

pulse of affectionate feeling. "How can I ever be half thankful enough, or take half enough pains to please one who seems to have no wish so much at heart as that of pleasing me? Oh, how happy I am! — how thankful I ought to be!" thought Hester, again walking on towards the beautiful rustic building which she had now nearly reached; "the slightest wish cannot pass through my mind, but somehow or other Mr. Carlton finds it out, and it turns into reality—as if I had the slaves of the lamp at command, like Aladdin! This Dairy-house, now! I did but say how much I liked the old one at Belford, and here is one a thousand times prettier than that! But I shall not like this better, beautiful as it is,—no! nor so well," thought the grateful girl; "for here will be no Giles Cousins with his good wife to welcome me as they used to do there, and contrive a hundred ways to cheat me into taking the gifts they could ill spare themselves. Dear Giles Cousins!—he, that was called so crabbed, and who was so generous, so delicate, so kind!—Dear, dear Giles Cousins! how glad he would be to see me so happy! I wonder what I can send him, dear old Giles! Oh, how I should like to see him!"

This train of thought had brought Hester to the rustic porch of the Dairy-house, which was, as she had said, an enlarged and improved copy of that at Belford, constructed with the magical speed which wealth (the true lamp of Aladdin) can command, to gratify a fancy which she had expressed on her first arrival at Cranley Park. Filled with grateful recollections of her good old friend, Hester reached the porch, and looking up to admire the excellent taste displayed in its construction, she saw before her—could she believe her eyes?—the very person of whom she had been thinking, Giles Cousins himself, with a smile of satisfaction softening his rugged countenance, his good wife peeping over his shoulder, and Mr. Carlton and Mrs. Kinlay in the back-ground, delighted witnesses of the joyful meeting. He clasped her in his arms, and kissed her as he would have kissed the daughter whom he fancied she resembled; and then, seized with a sudden recollection of the difference of station, he begged pardon, and let her go.

"Oh, Master Cousins!" cried Hester, still retaining his hard rough fist, and pressing it between her delicate hands; "dear Master Cousins! how very, very glad I am to see you

and your good dame ! It was the only wish I had in the world. Oh, I shall be too happy ! And you are come to stay ? — I know you are come to stay ! ”

“ To be sure I be, miss,” responded honest Giles : “ come to stay till you be tired of me ; — come for good.”

“ Oh, it is too much happiness ! ” exclaimed Hester. “ How strange it is, that as soon as a wish passes through my mind, Mr. Carlton sees it, and makes it come to pass. Oh, I shall be too happy ! ” cried poor Hester, the tears chasing each other over cheeks glowing like maiden-roses ; “ I shall be too happy ! and I never can be thankful enough ! Was ever any one half so happy before ? — did ever any one deserve such happiness ? ” exclaimed Hester, as, her tears flowing faster and faster, she flung herself into Mr. Carlton’s arms.

Note. — That that beautiful race of dogs, the Italian greyhound, is susceptible of a personal partiality distinct from the common attachment of a dog to its master — a preference that may almost be called friendship, I have had a very pleasant and convincing proof in my own person. Several years ago I passed some weeks with a highly-valued friend, the wife of an eminent artist, in one of the large, old-fashioned houses in Newman-street — a house so much too large for their small family, that a part of it was let to another, and a very interesting couple, a young artist and his sister, just then rising into the high reputation which they have since so deservedly sustained. The two families lived with their separate establishments in this roomy and commodious mansion on the best possible terms of neighbourhood, but as completely apart as if they had resided in different houses ; the only part which they shared in common being the spacious entrance-hall and the wide stone staircase : and on that staircase I had the happiness of forming an acquaintance, which soon ripened into intimacy, with a very beautiful Italian greyhound belonging to the young painter and his sister.

I, who had from childhood the love of dogs, which is sometimes said to distinguish the future old maid, was enchanted with the playful and graceful creature, who bounded about the house with the elegance and sportiveness of a tame fawn, and omitted no opportunity of paying my court to the pretty and gentle little animal ; whilst Romeo (for such was his name

also) felt, with the remarkable instinct which dogs and children so often display, the truth of my professions, the reality and sincerity of my regard, and not only returned my caresses with interest, but showed a marked preference for my society; would waylay me in the hall, follow me up stairs and down, accompany me into my friend's drawing-room, steal after me to my own bedchamber, and, if called by his master and mistress, would try to entice me into their part of the domicile, and seem so glad to welcome me to their apartments, that it furnished an additional reason for my frequent visits to those accomplished young people.

In short, it was a regular flirtation; and when I went away, next to the dear and excellent friends whom I was leaving, I lamented the separation from Romeo. Although I had a pet dog at home, (when was I ever without one?) and that dog affectionate and beautiful, I yet missed the beautiful and affectionate Italian greyhound. And Romeo missed me. My friends wrote me word that he wandered up the house and down; visited all my usual haunts; peeped into every room where he had ever seen me; listened to every knock; and was for several days almost as uneasy as if he had lost his own fair mistress.

Two years passed before I again visited Newman-street; and then, crossing the hall in conversation with my kind hostess, just as I reached the bottom of the staircase I heard, first a cry of recognition, then a bounding step, and then, almost before I saw him, with the speed of lightning Romeo sprang down a whole flight of stairs, and threw himself on my bosom, trembling and quivering with delight, and nestling his delicate glossy head close to my cheek, as he had been accustomed to do during our former intercourse.

Poor, pretty Romeo! he must be dead long ago! But Mr. John Hayter may remember, perhaps, giving me a drawing of him, trailing a wreath of roses in front of an antique vase;—a drawing which would be valuable to any one, as it combines the fine taste of one of our most tasteful painters with the natural grace of his elegant favourite; but which, beautiful as it is, I value less as a work of art than as a most faithful and characteristic portrait of the gentle and loving creature, whom one must have had a heart of stone not to have loved after such a proof of affectionate recognition.

FLIRTATION EXTRAORDINARY.

THERE is a fashion in every thing—more especially in every thing feminine, as we luckless wearers of caps and petticoats are, of all other writers, bound to allow: the very faults of the ladies (if ladies can have faults), as well as the terms by which those faults are distinguished, change with the changing time. The severe but honest puritan of the Commonwealth was succeeded by the less rigid, but probably less sincere prude, who, from the Restoration to George the Third's day, seems, if we may believe those truest painters of manners, the satirists and the comic poets, to have divided the realm of beauty with the fantastic coquette—*L'Allegro* reigning over one half of the female world, *Il Pensieroso* over the other.

With the decline of the artificial comedy, these two grand divisions amongst women, which had given such life to the acted drama, and had added humour to the prose of Addison and point to the verse of Pope, gradually died away. The Suspicious Husband of Dr. Hoadly, one of the wittiest and most graceful of those graceful and witty pictures of manners, which have now wholly disappeared from the comic scene, is, I think, nearly the last in which the characters are so distinguished. The wide-reaching appellations of prude and coquette, the recognised title, the definite classification, the outward profession were gone, whatever might be the case with the internal propensities; and the sex, somewhat weary it may be, of finding itself called by two names, neither of them very desirable, the one being very disagreeable and the other a little naughty, branched off into innumerable sects, with all manner of divisions and sub-divisions, and has contrived to exhibit during the last sixty or seventy years as great a variety of humours, good or bad, and to deserve and obtain as many epithets (most of them sufficiently ill-omened), as its various and capricious fellow-biped called man.

Amongst these epithets were two which I well remember to have heard applied some thirty years ago to more than one fair lady in the good town of Belford, but which have now

passed away as completely as their disparaging predecessors, coquette and prude. The "words of fear" in question were "satirical" and "sentimental." With the first of these sad nicknames we have nothing to do. Child as I was, it seemed to me at the time, and I think so more strongly on recollection, that in two or three instances the imputation was wholly undeserved; that a girlish gaiety of heart on the one hand, and a womanly fineness of observation on the other, gave rise to an accusation which mixes a little, and a very little cleverness, with a great deal of ill nature. But with the fair satirist, be the appellation true or false, we have no concern; our business is with one lady of the class sentimental, and with one, and one only, of those adventures to which ladies of that class are, to say the least, peculiarly liable.

Miss Selina Savage (her detractors said that she was christened Sarah, founding upon certain testimony, of I know not what value, of aunts and godmothers; but I abide by her own signature, as now lying before me in a fine slender Italian hand, at the bottom of a note somewhat yellow by time, but still stamped in a French device of *pensées* and *soucis*, and still faintly smelling of attar of roses; the object of the said note being to borrow "Mr. Pratt's exquisite poem of Sympathy,")—Miss Selina Savage (I hold by the autograph) was a young lady of doubtful age; there being on this point also a small variation of ten or a dozen years between her own assertions and those of her calumniators; but of a most sentimental aspect (in this respect all were agreed); tall, fair, pale, and slender, she being so little encumbered with flesh and blood, and so little tinted with the diversity of colouring thereunto belonging,—so completely blonde in hair, eyes, and complexion, that a very tolerable portrait of her might be cut out in white paper, provided the paper were thin enough, or drawn in chalks, white and black, upon a pale brown ground. Nothing could be too shadowy or too vapoury; the Castle Spectre, flourishing in all the glory of gauze drapery on the stage of Drury Lane—the ghosts of Ossian made out of the mists of the hills—were but types of Miss Selina Savage. Her voice was like her aspect,—sighing, crying, dying; and her conversation as lachrymose as her voice: she sang sentimental songs, played sentimental airs, wrote sentimental letters, and read sentimental books; has given away her parrot

for laughing, and turned off her footboy for whistling a country-dance.

The abode of this amiable damsel was a small neat dwelling, somewhat inconveniently situated, at the back of the Holy Brook, between the Abbey Mills on the one side and a great timber-wharf on the other, with the stream running between the carriage-road and the house, and nothing to unite them but a narrow foot-bridge, which must needs be crossed in all weathers. It had, however, certain recommendations which more than atoned for these defects in the eyes of its romantic mistress: three middle-sized cypress-trees at one end of the court; in the front of her mansion two-well grown weeping willows; an address to "Holy Brook Cottage," absolutely invaluable to such a correspondent, and standing in most advantageous contrast with the streets, terraces, crescents, and places of which Belford was for the most part composed; and a very fair chance of excellent material for the body of her letters by the abundant casualties and Humane Society cases afforded by the footbridge—no less than one old woman, three small children, and two drunken men having been ducked in the stream in the course of one winter. Drowning would have been too much of a good thing; but of that, from the shallowness of the water, there was happily no chance.

Miss Savage, with two quiet, orderly, lightfooted, and soft-spoken maidens, had been for some years the solitary tenant of the pretty cottage by the Holy Brook. She had lost her father during her early childhood; and the death of her mother, a neat quiet old lady, whose interminable carpet-work is amongst the earliest of my recollections—I could draw the pattern now,—and the absence of her brother, a married man with a large family and a prosperous business, who resided constantly in London,—left the fair Selina the entire mistress of her fortune, her actions, and her residence. That she remained in Belford, although exclaiming against the place and its society—its gossiping morning visits and its evening card-parties, as well as the general want of refinement amongst its inhabitants—might be imputed partly perhaps to habit, and an aversion to the trouble of moving, and partly to a violent friendship between herself and another damsel of the same class, a good deal younger and a great deal sillier, who lived two streets off, and whom she saw every day and wrote to every hour.

Martha, or, as her friend chose to call her, Matilda Maxwell, was the fourth or fifth daughter of a spirit merchant in the town. Frequent meetings at the circulating library introduced the fair ladies to each other, and a congeniality of taste brought about first an acquaintance, and then an intimacy, which difference of station (for Miss Savage was of the highest circle in this provincial society, and poor Martha was of no circle at all), only seemed to cement the more firmly.

The Maxwells, flattered by Selina's notice of their daughter, and not sorry that that notice had fallen on the least useful and cheerful of the family — the one that amongst all their young people they could the most easily spare, put her time and her actions entirely into her own power, or rather into that of her patroness. Mr. Maxwell, a calculating man of business, finding flirtation after flirtation go off without the conclusion matrimonial, and knowing the fortune to be considerable, began to look on Matilda as the probable heiress ; and except from her youngest brother Frank, a clever but unlucky schoolboy, who delighted in plaguing his sister and laughing at sentimental friendships, this intimacy, from which all but one member was sedulously excluded, was cherished and promoted by the whole family.

Very necessary was Miss Matilda at the Holy Brook Cottage. She filled there the important parts of listener, adviser, and confidant ; and filled them with an honest and simple-hearted sincerity which the most skilful flatterer that ever lived would have failed to imitate. She read the same books, sang the same songs, talked in the same tone, walked with the same air, and wore the same fashions ; which upon her, she being naturally short and stout, and dark-eyed and rosy, had, as her brother Frank told her, about the same effect that armour similar to Don Quixote's would have produced upon Sancho Panza.

One of her chief services in the character of confidant was of course to listen to the several love passages of which since she was of the age of Juliet, her friend's history might be said to have consisted. How she had remained so long unmarried might have moved some wonder, since she seemed always immersed in the passion which leads to such a conclusion : but then her love was something like the stream that flowed before her door — a shallow brooklet, easy to slip into,

and easy to slip out of. From two or three imprudent engagements her brother had extricated her ; and from one, the most dangerous of all, she had been saved by her betrothed having been claimed the week before the nuptials by another wife. At the moment of which we write, however, the fair Selina seemed once more in a fair way to change her name.

That she was fond of literature of a certain class, we have already intimated ; and, next after Sterne and Rousseau, the classics of her order, and their horde of vile imitators, whether sentimental novelists, or sentimental essayists, or sentimental dramatists, she delighted in the horde of nameless versifiers whom Gifford demolished ; in other words, after bad prose her next favourite reading was bad verse ; and as this sort of verse is quite as easy to write as to read—I should think of the two rather easier — she soon became no inconsiderable perpetrator of sonnets without rhyme, and songs without reason ; and elegies, by an ingenious combination, equally deficient in both.

After writing this sort of verse, the next step is to put it in print ; and in those days (we speak of above thirty years ago), when there was no Mrs. Hemans to send grace and beauty, and purity of thought and feeling, into every corner of the kingdom — no Mary Howitt to add the strength and originality of a manly mind to the charm of a womanly fancy, — in those days the Poet's Corner of a country newspaper was the refuge of every poetaster in the county. So intolerably bad were the acrostics, the rebuses, the epigrams, and the epitaphs which adorned those asylums for fugitive pieces, that a selection of the worst of them would really be worth printing amongst the Curiosities of Literature. A less vain person than Miss Selina Savage might have thought she did the “ H——shire Courant ” honour in sending them an elegy on the death of a favourite bullfinch, with the signature “ Eugenia.”

It was printed forthwith, read with ecstatic admiration by the authoress and her friend, and with great amusement by Frank Maxwell, who, now the spruce clerk of a spruce attorney, continued to divert himself with worming out of his simple sister all the secrets of herself and her friend, and was then unfair enough to persecute the poor girl with the most unmerciful ridicule. The elegy was printed, and in a fair way of being forgotten by all but the writer, when in the next

number of the "Courant" appeared a complimentary sonnet addressed to the authoress of the elegy, and signed "Orlando."

Imagine the delight of the fair Eugenia ! She was not in the least astonished, — a bad and inexperienced writer never is taken by surprise by any quantity of praise ; but she was charmed and interested as much as woman could be. She answered his sonnet by another, which, by the by, contained, contrary to Boileau's well-known recipe, and the practice of all nations, a quatrain too many. He replied to her rejoinder ; compliments flew thicker and faster ; and the poetical correspondence between Orlando and Eugenia became so tender, that the editor of the "H——shire Courant" thought it only right to hint to the gentleman that the post-office would be a more convenient medium for his future communications.

As this intimation was accompanied by the address of the lady, it was taken in very good part ; and before the publication of the next number of the provincial weekly journal, Miss Savage received the accustomed tribute of verse from Orlando, enveloped in a prose epistle, dated from a small town about thirty miles off, and signed "Henry Turner."

An answer had been earnestly requested, and an answer the lady sent ; and by return of post she received a reply, to which she replied with equal alertness ; then came a love-letter in full form, and then a petition for an interview ; and to the first the lady answered anything but No ! and to the latter she assented.

The time fixed for this important visit, it being now the merry month of May, was three o'clock in the day. He had requested to find her alone ; and accordingly by one, P. M., she had dismissed her faithful confidante, promising to write to her the moment Mr. Turner was gone — had given orders to admit no one but a young gentleman who sent in his visiting ticket (such being the plan proposed by the innamorado), and began to set herself and her apartment in order for his reception ; she herself in an elegant dishabille, between sentimental and pastoral, and her room in a confusion equally elegant, of music, books, and flowers ; Zimmermann and Lavater on the table ; and one of those dramas — those *tragédies bourgeoises*, or *comédies larmoyantes*, which it seems incredible that Beaumarchais, he that wrote the two matchless plays of Figaro, could have written — in her hand.

It was hardly two o'clock, full an hour before his time, when a double knock was heard at the door; Mr. Turner's card was sent in, and a well-dressed and well-looking young man ushered into the presence of the fair poetess. There is no describing such an interview. My readers must imagine the compliments and the blushes, the fine speeches on either side, the long words and the fine words, the sighings and the languishments. The lady was satisfied; the gentleman had no reason to complain; and after a short visit he left her, promising to return in the evening to take his coffee with herself and her friend.

She had just sat down to express to that friend, in her accustomed high-flown language, the contentment of her heart, when another knock was followed by a second visiting ticket. "Mr. Turner again! Oh! I suppose he has remembered something of consequence. Show him in."

And in came a *second* and a different Mr. Turner!!

The consternation of the lady was inexpressible! That of the gentleman, when the reason of her astonishment was explained to him, was equally vehement and flattering. He burst into eloquent threats against the impostor who had assumed his name, the wretch who had dared to trifle with such a passion, and such a ladye-love; and being equally well-looking and fine-spoken, full of rapturous vows and ardent protestations, and praise addressed equally to the woman and the authoress, conveyed to the enchanted Selina the complete idea of her lover-poet.

He took leave of her at the end of half an hour, to ascertain, if possible, the delinquent who had usurped his name and his assignation, purposing to return in the evening to meet her friend; and again she was sitting down to her writing-table, to exclaim over this extraordinary adventure, and to dilate on the charms of the true Orlando, when three o'clock struck, and a third knock at the door heralded a third visiting ticket, and a *third* Mr. Turner!!!

A shy, awkward, simple youth, was this,—the real genuine wooer and poet—bowing and bashful, and with a stutter that would have rendered his words unintelligible even if time had been allowed him to bring them forth. But no time was allowed him. Provoked past all patience, believing herself the laughing-stock of the town, our sentimental fair one forgot

her refinement, her delicacy, her fine speaking, and her affectation; and calling her maids and her footboy to aid, drove out the unfortunate suitor with such a storm of vituperation — such a torrent of plain, honest, homely scolding — that the luckless Orlando took to his heels, and missing his footing on the narrow bridge, tumbled head-foremost into the Holy Brook, and emerged dripping like a river god, to the infinite amusement of the two impostors, and of Frank Maxwell, the contriver of the jest, who lay *perdu* in the mill, and told the story, as a great secret, to so many persons, that before the next day it was known half over the place, and was the eventual cause of depriving the good town of Belford of one of the most inoffensive and most sentimental of its inhabitants. The fair Selina decamped in a week.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

the first of these, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the second, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the third, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the fourth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the fifth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the sixth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the seventh, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the eighth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the ninth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the tenth, the history, was the speaking, and the other

the eleventh, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the twelfth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the thirteenth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the fourteenth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the fifteenth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the sixteenth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the seventeenth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the eighteenth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the nineteenth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the twentieth, the history, was the speaking, and the other

the twenty-first, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the twenty-second, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the twenty-third, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the twenty-fourth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the twenty-fifth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the twenty-sixth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the twenty-seventh, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the twenty-eighth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the twenty-ninth, the history, was the speaking, and the other
the thirtieth, the history, was the speaking, and the other

 VOLUME THE THIRD.

BELLES OF THE BALL-ROOM.

No. III.

THE SILVER ARROW.

AMONGST the most recent of our county beauties, were a pair of fair young friends, whose mutual attachment, in the best sense of the word romantic—that is to say, fervent, uncalculating, unworldly—was smiled at by one part of our little world, and praised and admired by another; but, in consideration, perhaps, of the youth and the many attractions of the parties, pretty indulgently looked upon by all. Never was a closer intimacy. They rode together, walked together, read together, sang together, sat in the same pew at church, and danced in the same quadrille at the assembly. Not a day passed without some proof of affection *de part et d'autre*; and at the last target day at Oakley——But I must not forestall my story.

Archery meetings are the order of the day. We all know that in times of yore the bow was the general weapon of the land; that the battles of Cressy and of Poitiers were won by the stout English archers, and the king's deer slain in his forests by the bold outlaws Robin Hood and Little John, and the mad priest Friar Tuck; that battles were won and ships taken, not by dint of rockets and cannon-balls, but by the broad arrow; and that (to return to more domestic, and therefore more interesting illustrations) William of Cloudesley, the English William Tell, saved his forfeited life by shooting an apple from his son's head, at six score paces. But not to revert to those times, which were perhaps rather too much in earnest, when the dinner, or the battle, or the life depended on

the truth of the aim ; and the weapon (to say nothing of the distance) would be as unmanageable to a modern arm as the bow of Ulysses ; not to go back to that golden age of archery and minstrelsy, never since the days of James and Elizabeth, when the bow, although no longer the favourite weapon, continued to be the favourite pastime of the middle classes, have bows and arrows been so rife in this England of ours, as at the present time. Every country mansion has its butts and its targets, every young lady her quiver ; and that token of honour, the prize arrow, trumpery as, sooth to say, it generally is, is as much coveted and cherished and envied, as if, instead of a toy for a pedlar's basket, it were a diamond necklace, or an emerald bracelet.

To confess the truth, I suspect that the whole affair is rather more of a plaything now-a-days than it was even in the later time to which we have alluded ; partly, perhaps, because the ladies, with the solitary exception of Maid Marian, (who, however, in Ben Jonson's beautiful fragment, "The Sad Shepherd," of which she is the heroine, is *not* represented as herself taking part in the sylvan exercises of her followers,) contented themselves with witnessing, instead of rivalling, the feats of our forefathers ; partly, it may be, because, as I have before observed, the thews and sinews of our modern archers, let them call themselves Toxopholites fifty times over, would tug with very little effect at the weapons of Clym of the Clough, or of Little John, so called because he was the biggest person of his day. Or even if a fine gentleman of the age of William the Fourth should arrive at bending a 200-pound bow, think of his cleaving a willow wand at 400 yards' distance ! Modern limbs cannot compass such feats. He might as well try to emulate the achievement of Milo, and attempt to lift an ox.

Nevertheless, although rather too much of a toy for boys and girls, and wanting altogether in the variety and interest of that other great national out-door amusement called cricket, it would be difficult to find a better excuse for drawing people together in a country neighbourhood ; an object always desirable, and particularly so in this little midland county of ours, where, between party squabbles and election squabbles, (affairs of mere personal prejudice, with which politics have often nothing to do,) half the gentry live in a state of continual

non-intercourse and consequent ignorance of each other's real good qualities, and of the genial, pardonable, diverting foibles, which perhaps conduce as much as more grave, solid excellence, not only to the amusement of society, but to our mutual liking and regard for each other. A man perfect in thought and word and deed is a fine thing to contemplate at reverent distance, like some rare statue on its pedestal; but for the people who are destined to mix with their fellows in this work-a-day world—to walk and talk, and eat and drink like their neighbours,—the greater store of harmless peculiarities and innocent follies they bring to keep our follies in countenance, the better for them and for ourselves. Luckily there is no lack of these congenial elements in human nature. The only thing requisite is a scene for their display.

This want seemed completely supplied by the Archery Meeting; an approved neutral ground, where politics could not enter, and where the Capulets and Montagues of H——shire might contemplate each other's good qualities, and be conciliated by each other's defects, without the slightest compromise of party etiquette or party dignity. The heads of the contending houses had long ago agreed to differ, like the chiefs of rival factions in London, and met and visited, except just at an election time, with as much good humour and cordiality as Lady Grey meets and visits Lady Beresford; it was amongst the partisans, the adherents of the several candidates, that the prejudice had been found so inveterate; and every rational person, except those who were themselves infected with the prevalent moral disorder, hailed the prescription of so pleasant a remedy for the county complaint.

Accordingly, the proposal was no sooner made at a country dinner-party than it was carried by acclamation; a committee was appointed, a secretary chosen, and the pleasant business of projecting and anticipating commenced upon the spot. For the next week, nothing could be heard of but the Archery Meeting; bows and arrows were your only subject, and Lincoln green your only wear.

Then came a few gentle difficulties; difficulties that seem as necessary preludes to a party of pleasure as the winds and rains of April are to the flowers of May. The committee, composed, as was decorous, not of the eager sons and zealous daughters and bustling mammas of the principal families, bu

of their cool, busy, indifferent papas, could by no chance be got together ; they were hay-making, or they were justicing, or they were attending the House, or they had forgotten the day, or they had not received the letter ; so that, in spite of all the efforts of the most active of secretaries, on Monday four only assembled out of twenty, on Tuesday two, and on Wednesday none at all.

Then, of the three empty houses in the neighbourhood, on either of which they had reckoned so confidently, that they had actually talked over their demerits after the manner of bidders at an auction who intend to buy, the one was point blank refused to Mr. Secretary's courteous application, on the ground of the mischievousness of the parties, the danger of their picking the flowers, and the certainty of their trampling the grass ; the second, after having been twenty years on sale, suddenly found a purchaser just as it was wanted for the Archery Club ; and the third, which had been for years thirty and odd snugly going to ruin under the provident care of the Court of Chancery—a case of disputed title,—and of which it had been proposed to take temporary possession as a sort of “no man's land,” found itself most unexpectedly adjudged to a legal owner by the astounding activity of my Lord Brougham. The club was its wit's end, and likely to come to a dissolution before it was formed, (if an Englishwoman may be permitted to speak good Irish,) when luckily a neighbouring M.P., a most kind and genial person, whose fine old mansion was neither on sale nor in Chancery, and who patriotically sacrificed his grass and his flowers for the public good, offered his beautiful place, and furnished the Oakley Park Archery Club, not only with “a local habitation,” but “a name.”

Then came the grand difficulty of all, the selection of members. Everybody knows that in London the question of caste or station—or, to use perhaps a better word, of gentility—is very easily settled, or rather it settles itself without fuss or trouble. In the great city, there is room for everybody. No one is so high or so low as to be without his equals ; and, in the immense number of circles into which society is divided, he falls insensibly into that class to which his rank, his fortune, his habits, and his inclinations are best adapted. In the distant provinces, on the other hand, the division is equally easy, from a reverse reason. There, the inhabitants

may almost be comprised in the peasantry, the yeomanry, the clergy, and the old nobility and gentry, the few and distant lords of the soil living in their own ancestral mansions, and mixing almost exclusively with each other, not from airs, but from the absolute thinness of population amongst the educated or cultivated classes. But in these small midland counties close to London, where the great estates have changed masters so often that only two or three descendants of the original proprietors are to be found in a circuit of twenty miles, and where even the estates themselves are broken into small fractions ; — counties where you cannot travel a quarter of a mile without bursting on some line of new paling enclosing a belt of equally new plantation, and giving token of a roomy, commodious, square dwelling, red or white, as may suit the taste of the proprietor, or some “cot of spruce gentility,” verandahed and beporched according to the latest fashion. very low, very pretty, and very inconvenient ; — in these populous country villages, where persons of undoubted fortune but uncertain station are as plenty as blackberries, it requires no ordinary tact in a provincial lord-chamberlain to grant or to refuse the privilege of the *entrée*.

Perhaps the very finest definitions of a gentleman in our own, or in any other language, may be found in Mr. Ward’s “*De Vere**,” and in the motto of (I think) the Rutland family, “Manners make the man ;” but our country practice seems rather to be grounded on the inimitable answer of the ineffable Mr. Dubster in Madame D’Arblay’s “*Camilla*,” who, on being asked, What made him a gentleman? gravely replied, “Leaving off business ;” or on the still nicer distinction, so admirably ridiculed by another great female writer (Miss Austen, in “*Emma*”), where a Mr. Suckling, a Bristol merchant, who had retired from trade some eight or nine years

* “By a gentleman, we mean not to draw a line that would be invidious between high and low, rank and subordination, riches and poverty. The distinction is in the mind. Whoever is open, loyal, and true ; whoever is of humane and affable demeanour ; whoever is honourable in himself, and candid in his judgment of others, and requires no law but his word to make him fulfil an engagement ; such a man is a gentleman, and such a man may be found among the tillers of the earth. But high birth and distinction for the most part insure the high sentiment which is denied to poverty and the lower professions. It is hence, and hence only, that the great claim their superiority ; and hence, what has been so beautifully said of honour, the law of kings, is no more than true :

“ ‘ It aids and strengthens virtue when it meets her,
And imitates her actions where she is not.’ ”

De Vere, vol. ii. page 22.

back, refuses to visit another Bristolian who had purified himself from the dregs of the sugar-warehouse only the Christmas before.

Now Mr. Dubster's definition, besides being sufficiently liberal and comprehensive, had the great merit of being clear and practicable ; and our good-humoured secretary, a man of ten thousand, well-born, well-bred, well-fortuned, and thoroughly well-conditioned, — a man light, buoyant and bounding, as full of activity as his favourite blood-horse, and equally full of kindness, — would willingly have abided by the rule, and was by no means disinclined to extend his invitations to the many educated, cultivated, rich, and liberal persons, whose fathers were still guilty of travelling to London once a week to superintend some old respectable concern in Austin Friars, or St. Mary Axe, or even to visit Lloyd's or the Stock Exchange. But unluckily the Mr. Sucklings of the neighbourhood prevailed. "Standing" (to borrow an expressive Americanism) carried the day, and Mr. Brown, whose mother eighteen years ago had purchased the Lawn on one side of Headingly Heath, had not only the happiness of excluding his neighbour Mr. Green, who had been settled at the Grove only a twelvemonth, but even of barring out his still nearer neighbour Mr. White, who had been established in the Manor House these half-dozen years. Such, at least, was the decree passed in full committee ; but it is the common and rightful fate of over-rigorous laws to be softened in practice, and Mr. White being a most agreeable, hospitable man, with a very pleasant clever wife, and the Misses Green ranking amongst the prettiest girls in the neighbourhood, somehow or other they eventually got admittance.

These greater difficulties being fairly surmounted at the cost of a few affronts on the part of the forgotten and many murmurs on the part of the omitted, then followed a train of minor troubles about dinners and crockery, targets and uniforms, regulations and rules. Drawing up the code of archery laws, although it seems no mighty effort of legislation, cost our committee almost as much labour as might have gone to the concoction of a second Code Napoleon, or another Bill for Local Courts ; and the equipment of half the regiments in the service would have consumed less time and thought than were wasted on the male and female costumes of

the Oakley Park Archery Club. Twelve several dolls were dressed in white and green of various patterns by the committee-men and their wives; and such a feud ensued between Mr. Giles, haberdasher, in King Street, in our dear town of Belford, and Miss Fenton, milliner, in the Market Place, each maintaining his and her separate and very various version of the appointed regulation doll, that nothing but the female privilege of scolding without fighting prevented that most serious breach of the peace called a duel. It has been hinted that the unfortunate third party (that is to say, the doll) was a sufferer in the fray, the flowers being torn from her bonnet, the bows from her petticoat, and the pelerine from her bosom. For this I do not vouch; but for the exceeding ugliness of the selected regimentals, whether male or female, I can most conscientiously answer. It required some ingenuity to invent anything so thoroughly hideous. The young ladies, in clear muslin and green ribands, arranged as they thought fit, looked like pretty little shepherdesses; but their unfortunate mammas, dressed by Mr. Giles, or Miss Fenton, according to the pattern of the demolished doll, in gowns of white chaly, barred like a hussar jacket, with dull and dismal green, had, from the dim colour of the woollen material, more the air of a flock of sheep or a bevy of carmelite nuns, or a troop of shrouded corpses escaped from their coffins, or a set of statues like that of the commandant in *Don Giovanni*, when seen from behind, or of the figure of *Orcus* (the classical Death), as represented in the *Alcestris*, when viewed frontwise — than of a group of middle-aged English ladies, equipped for a party of pleasure.

In spite, however, of jostling interests and conflicting vanities, the day of the archery meeting was anticipated with great and general delight by the young people in H——shire; nor were their expectations disappointed. For once in a way, the full fruition of enjoyment outran the vivid pleasures of hope. Even as a measure of conciliation, the experiment succeeded infinitely better than such experiments generally do succeed. The diverse factions, *Neri* and *Bianchi*, *Montecchi*, and *Capuletti*, met at the target-side, looked each other in the face, bowed and curtseyed, smiled and laughed, talked sober sense and agreeable nonsense, according to their several inclinations and capacities, and became, by the insensible

influence of juxta-position, the mere habit of meeting and speaking, almost as good friends as if such a thing as a contested election never had happened, and never could happen again: — a happy state of feeling, to which I can only say, *Esto perpetua!*

All went well at Oakley. The dinners were excellent and abundant, and the appetites of the diners so manageable and complaisant, that, although of the class whose usual dinner-hour varies from six to eight, they actually contrived to eat their principal meal at three, without showing the slightest symptom of its arriving before it was wanted. The music was also good, and the dancers untirable; and although a dose of pleasuring, a course of shooting, walking, eating, talking, and dancing, which beginning at one o'clock post meridium, lasted to rather more than the same hour the next morning, rivalling in fatigue and duration the excursion of a maid-servant to a country fair, might naturally be expected to produce all sorts of complaints amongst our delicate young ladies, I did not hear of a single case of illness arising from the archery meeting. So omnipotent, in the female constitution, is will.

I myself found an unexpected gratification, or rather an unexpected relief, at the end of the first two meetings. I had taken a sort of personal aversion to the female regimentals, the regulation dress of the ladies. The thing affected my nerves; I could not abide the sight of it. But "there is some soul of goodness in things evil." The odious chaly was found to have one capital point: — it wears out sooner than any material under the sun, and, difficult to make, takes care very speedily to unmake itself by fraying in every direction; so that, rent and ragged, tattered and torn, the hideous ladies' uniform was, at the third meeting, pretty uniformly cast aside, and female taste again resumed its proper influence over the female toilet.

So far so good. But, when we English people take a fancy in our heads, we are apt to let it run away with us; we hoist all sail, and cast the ballast overboard. And so it happened in the present instance. After the first two or three meetings, all the genteel population of H——shire, men, women, and children, went archery mad — a lunacy reserved for these particular dog-days. You should not see a lawn of gentility

without the targets up, or an entrance-hall without bows leaning against every corner, and arrows scattered over every chair. All other amusements were relinquished. Dinner-parties were at an end ; pic-nics were no more. Nothing would go down but private bow-meetings and public target-days. Dancing, heretofore the delight of a country beauty, was only tolerated after the archery, because people could not well shoot by candle-light ; and, as the autumn drew on, even that other branch of shooting, in which our young sportsmen used to take such pleasure, entirely lost its charm. Guns were out of fashion. The ecstatic first of September became a common day ; and to me, who had watched the prevailing mania with some amusement, it appeared likely that, unless the birds should make up their minds to be killed by bows and arrows, (as Locksley brought down the wild goose,) a process which I did not think it probable that they would consent to, the partridges hereabout might have a fair chance of living on till the next season.

Archery was the universal subject. Archery songs stood open on the piano. Archery engravings covered the print-table. The "Archer's Guide" was the only book worth opening, and bows and arrows the only topic fit to discuss. Political economy was no longer heard in the drawing-room, or the East India question in the dining-parlour ; Don Carlos and Don Miguel had been "pretty fellows in their day," but their reign was over. What was a great speech in the House to the glory of placing three arrows in the target ? or a great victory to a shot in the gold ? Time was no longer computed by the calendar ; almanacks were out of fashion. The whole country-side dated from the Oakley target-days, as the Greeks from the Olympic Games.

The little boys and girls, at home for the holidays, caught the enthusiasm. Bats and balls, and dolls and battledores, were all cast aside as worthless trumpery : toys, in any other than the prevailing shape, were an affront.

From the manly Etonian, preferring a bow to a boat, to his six-year old sister taking her fairy quiver to bed with her, the whole rising generation enrolled themselves in the archery band — a supplementary auxiliary legion. They added an enclosure called "The Butts" to their baby-houses, and equipped their dolls with bows and arrows.

Trade, as usual, made its advantages of the ruling passion. The bow business became a distinct branch of commerce; yew-trees rose in the market; and our good town of Belford was enlivened by no less than three dashing "archery warehouses," and a new coach called the Dart. Jewellers' shops glittered with emblematic trinkets; Cupids fluttered on our seals and our breakfast-cups; and the example of a certain Mr. Dod, a member of the Roxburghe Club, who is recorded to have been particularly mad on the subject "of Robin Hood and archery songs," was, as I have said before, followed by all H——shire.

The casualties which occurred in the pursuit of the exercise (as accidents will happen in the best regulated families) were quite ineffectual in damping the zeal of the professors, male and female. One bonnet has been struck through the crown, and a bunch of flowers in another fairly beheaded; several fingers (of gloves) have been knocked off; and one thumb of flesh and blood slightly lacerated. One gentleman was shot through the skirts, and two young ladies who were walking arm in arm were pinned together by the sleeve; whilst one fair archeress wounded another in the foot — the fate of Philoctetes, though not with the arrows of Hercules.

These calamities notwithstanding, the Oakley Park Archery Meetings continued as prosperous as if they had not been puffed in the county newspapers. The weather had been very fine for English weather in the months of June, July, and August, — that is to say, on the first meeting it had been a hurricane, which had blown down trees and chimneys; on the second it had been rather wet and intolerably cold, so that they were fain to have fires; and on the third so insufferably hot, that the spectators sat fanning themselves under the deep shadow of the great oak-trees. But what are these evils to a real genuine enthusiasm? — drops of water that make the fire burn brighter: — oil upon the flame. On the whole, the experiment had succeeded to a miracle. The members had the pleasure of being crowded at dinner and in the ball-room, — almost as much crowded as at a Quarter Sessions' dinner, or a London rout; — just the sort of grievance which papas and mammas like to grumble at. And the sons and daughters found amusement in a different line; — for the archery-ground proved a capital flirting-place, and hearts were

pierced there in reality, as well as in metaphor. For the rest, arrows were lost, and prizes won, and dinners eaten, and toasts drunk, and speeches made, and dances danced ; and all the world at Oakley was merry, if not wise.

So passed the first three meetings. The fourth, at the very end of August, was anticipated with growing and still increasing delight by the members of the Club, whose incessant practice had much sharpened their desire of exhibition and competition ; and to none was it more an object of delighted expectation than to Frances Vernon, a shy and timid girl, who generally shrank from public amusements, but who looked forward to this with a quite different feeling, since she was to be accompanied thither by her only brother Horace, a young man of considerable talents and acquirements, who, after spending several years abroad, had just returned to take possession of his paternal mansion in the neighbourhood of Oakley.

Horace and Frances Vernon were the only children of a very gallant officer of high family and moderate fortune, who had during his lifetime been amongst the most zealous followers of one of the two factions (the English Montecchi and Capuletti) who divided H——shire, and had bequeathed to his son as abundant a legacy of prejudices and feuds as would have done honour to a border chieftain of the fifteenth century. The good general's prime aversion, his pet hatred, had of course fallen upon his nearest opponent, his next neighbour, who, besides the sin of espousing one interest in H——shire, as the general espoused another — of being an uncompromising whig (radical his opponent was fain to call him), as the general was a determined tory — had committed the unpardonable crime of making his own large fortune as a Russian merchant ; and, not content with purchasing a considerable estate, which the general, to clear off old mortgages, had found it convenient to sell, had erected a huge staring red house within sight of the hall windows, where he kept twice as many horses, carriages, and servants, and saw at least three times as much company, as his aristocratic neighbour. If ever one good sort of man hated another (for they were both excellent persons in their way), General Vernon hated John Page.

John Page, on his side, who scorned to be outdone in an honest English aversion by any tory in Christendom, detested the general with equal cordiality ; and a warfare of the most inveterate animosity ensued between them at all places where it was possible that disputes should be introduced, at vestries and county meetings, at quarter-sessions, and at the weekly bench. In these skirmishes the general had much the best of the battle. Not only was his party more powerful and influential, but his hatred, being of the cold, courtly, provoking sort that never comes to words, gave him much advantage over an adversary hot, angry, and petulant, whose friends had great difficulty in restraining him within the permitted bounds of civil disputation. An ordinary champion would have been driven from the field by such a succession of defeats ; but our reformer (so he delighted to style himself) had qualities, good and bad, which prevented his yielding an inch. He was game to the back-bone. Let him be beaten on a question fifty times, and he would advance to the combat the fifty-first as stoutly as ever. He was a disputant whom there was no tiring down.

John Page was of a character not uncommon in his class in this age and country. Acute and shrewd on many subjects, he was yet on some favourite topics prejudiced, obstinate, opiniated, and conceited, as your self-educated man is often apt to be : add to this that he was irritable, impetuous, and violent, and we have all the elements of a good hater. On the other hand, he was a liberal master, a hospitable neighbour, a warm and generous friend, a kind brother, an affectionate husband, and a doting father : note, beside, that he was a square-made little man, with a bluff but good-humoured countenance, a bald head, an eagle eye, a loud voice, and a frank and unpolished but by no means vulgar manner, and the courteous reader will have a pretty correct idea of Mr. John Page.

Whether he or his aristocratic adversary would finally have gained the mastery at the bench and in the vestry, time only could have shown. Death stepped in and decided the question. The general, a spare, pale, temperate man, to whom such a disease seemed impossible, was carried off by apoplexy ; leaving a sickly, gentle-tempered widow and two children ; a son of high promise, who had just left college, and set out on a long tour through half of Europe and much of Asia ; and one

daughter, a delicate girl of fourteen, whom her mother, in consideration of her own low spirits and declining health, sent immediately to school.

Six years had elapsed between the general's death and the date of my little story, when Horace Vernon returning home to his affectionate relations, embrowned by long travel, but manly, graceful, spirited, and intelligent, even beyond their expectations, found them on the eve of the archery meeting, and was prevailed upon by his mother, far too ailing a woman to attend public places, to escort his sister and her chaperone—a female cousin on a visit at the house—to the appointed scene of amusement.

A happy party were they that evening! Horace, restored to his own country and his own home, his birthplace, and the scene of his earliest and happiest recollections, seated between his mild, placid, gracious mother, and the pretty timid sister, with whose simplicity and singleness of mind he was enchanted, seemed to have nothing more to desire on earth. He was, however, sensible to something like a revulsion of feeling;—for, besides being a dutiful inheritor of his father's aversions and prejudices, he had certain ancient quarrels of his own—*démêlés* with gamekeepers, and shooting and fishing squabbles, and such like questions, to settle with Mr. Page;—he did certainly feel something like disappointment when, on inquiring into those family details which his long absence had rendered so interesting, he found this their old hereditary enemy, the man whom he thought it meritorious to hate, transmuted into their chief adviser and friend. Mr. Page had put a stop to a lawsuit in which his mother's dower and his sister's small fortune were involved, and had settled the matter for them so advantageously, that they were better off than before; Mr. Page had discovered and recovered the family plate abstracted by a thieving butler, and had moreover contrived, to the unspeakable comfort of both ladies, that the thief should not be hanged; Mr. Page had sent out to Russia, in a most advantageous situation, the old steward's grandson, the pet and *protégé* of the family; Mr. Page had transported to the Swan River a *vautrien* cousin, the family plague; Mr. Page had new-filled the conservatory; Mr. Page had new-clothed the garden wall; and, finally, as Frances declared with tears in her eyes, Mr. Page had saved her dear mother's life by fetch-

ing Mr. Brodie in the crisis of a quinsey, in a space of time which, considering the distance, would seem incredible. This last assertion completely silenced Horace, who, to the previous feats, had exhibited a mingled incredulity of the benefits being really conferred, and an annoyance at receiving benefits from such a quarter, supposing them to be as great as their glowing gratitude represented. He said no more; but the feeling continued, and when poor Frances began to talk of her dear friend and schoolfellow, Lucy, Mr. Page's only child—of her talent and beauty, and her thousand amiable qualities—and when Mrs. Vernon added a gentle hint as to the large fortune that she would inherit, Horace smiled and said nothing, but went to bed as thoroughly determined to hate Mr. Page, and to find his daughter plain and disagreeable, as his deceased father, the general, could have done for the life of him. “I see your aim, my dear mother and sister,” thought he to himself; “but if my fortune be limited, so are my wishes; and I am not the man to enact Master Fenton to this Anne Page of yours, or Lucy, or whatever her name may be, though she were the richest tallow-merchant's daughter in all Russia.”

So thinking he went to bed, and so thinking he arose the next morning—the great morning of the archery meeting; and his spleen was by no means diminished when, on looking out of his window, the great ugly red house of his rich neighbour stared him in the face; and on looking to the other side of the park, he was differently but almost as unpleasantly affected by an object on which most persons would have gazed with delight,—his pretty little sister, light and agile as a bird, practising at the target, and almost dancing with joy as she lodged an arrow within the gold:—for Horace, just arrived from the Continent, was not only quite free from the prevailing mania, but had imbibed a strong prejudice against the amusement, which he considered too frivolous for men, and too full of attitude and display for women,—effeminate in the one sex, and masculine in the other.

He loved his sister, however, too well to entertain the slightest idea of interrupting a diversion in which she took so much pleasure, and which was approved by her mother and sanctioned by general usage. He joined her, therefore, not intending to say a word in disapprobation of the sport, with a kind observation on her proficiency and a prognostic that she would

win the Silver Arrow, when all his good resolutions were over-set by her reply.

“Oh, brother!” said Frances in a melancholy tone, “what a pity it is that you should have stayed all the summer in Germany, where you had no opportunity of target practice,—or else you too might have won a silver arrow, the gentlemen’s prize!”

“I win a silver arrow!” exclaimed Horace, nearly as much astonished, and quite as much scandalised, as Miss Arabella Morris when threatened by Poor Jack to be made a first lieutenant; — “I win a silver arrow!”

“Why not?” rejoined Frances. “I am sure you were always cleverer than anybody: you always carried away the prizes at school, and the honours at College; and I don’t suppose you have lost your ambition.”

“Ambition!” again echoed Horace, who, a very clever young man, and by no means devoid of that high quality, thought of it only in its large and true sense, as the inspiration which impels the conqueror of nations, or, better still, the conqueror of arts, the painter, the sculptor, the poet, the orator, in the noble race of fame. “Ambition!” once again exclaimed Horace — “ambition to make a hole in a piece of canvas!”

“Nay, dear brother, surely it is skill.”

“Skill! What was the name of the emperor who, when a man had attained to the art of throwing a grain of millet through the eye of a needle, rewarded *his skill* with the present of a bushel of millet? You remember the story, Frances? That emperor was a man of sense.”

“Oh, brother!” exclaimed Fanchon, shocked in her turn at this irreverent treatment of the object of her enthusiastic zeal, — “dear brother! — But, to be sure, they have no archery on the Continent.”

“No,” returned Horace; “they are wiser. Though I believe there are bows — bows made of whalebone — amongst some of the rudest tribes of the Cossacks. *They* use the weapon, in common with other savages; but wherever civilization has spread, it has disappeared; and I don’t know,” pursued this contumacious despiser of the bow, “that one could find a better criterion to mark the boundary of cultivated and uncultivated, intellectual and unintellectual nations, than their having so far kept up with the stream of improvement as

to abandon so ineffectual a mode of procuring their food or slaying their enemies, and taken to steel and gunpowder."

"Oh, brother, brother!" rejoined the disappointed damsel, "what sad prejudices you have brought home! I made sure of your liking an amusement so chivalrous and aristocratic!"

"Chivalrous!" retorted the provoking Horace: "why, not to go to the fountain-head—to Chaucer or to Froissart,—Scott, who amongst his thousand services to the world has taught everybody, even young ladies, the usages of by-gone ages, might have told you that the knights, whether of reality or of romance, fought with the lance, and in armour, and on horseback. You should have gotten up a tournament, Fanchon, if you wished to restore the amusements of the days of chivalry: and, as to the bow being aristocratic—why, it was the weapon of thieves and outlaws in its most picturesque use, and of the common soldiers of the time in its most respectable. The highwayman's pistols, Fanchette, or the brown musket! Choose which you will."

"Nay, brother! I mean in a subsequent age—as an amusement," again pleaded poor Fanchette. "I am sure, if you were arguing on my side of the question, you could bring fifty quotations from the old poets to prove that in that sense it was aristocratic. Could not you, now? Confess! you who never forget any thing!"

"Nay," retorted her brother, laughing, "it is hardly handsome to contend with so courteous an adversary: but, without pleading guilty to the memory of which you are pleased to accuse me—for, Heaven have mercy upon that man who shall recollect all that he reads!—I do remember me of a certain passage very apropos to my line of argument, in a certain comedy called 'The Wits,' written by a certain knight yclept William Davenant, who, if old Master Aubrey's scandal may be believed (and the gossip of two hundred years ago assumes, be it observed, a far more lofty and venerable air than the tittle-tattle of yesterday), might boast a more than dramatic relationship to the greatest poet that ever lived—William Shakspeare.* A dashing gallant of those days is promising

* Sir William Davenant had the luck to be connected with great names and great events. To say nothing of historical matters—with which, however, he was much mixed up—and the kings and queens, and princes amongst whom he lived, he is reported to have been Shakspeare's illegitimate son; and to have been saved from execution at Milton's intercession, whose life he had the honour and happiness of

his fair mistress to reform: how he kept his word is no concern of mine; but thus, amongst other matters saith the gentleman: —

——— “ ‘ This deboshed whingard
I will reclaim to comely bow and arrows,
And shoot with haberdashers at Finsbury,
And be thought the grandchild of Adam Bell.’ ”

“ Now, what do you say to this, fair lady? I’faith I wish that for just ten minutes—no longer—I *had* the memory which you impute to me, for the sole purpose of smothering you with quotations to the same effect.”

“ Well! it is confined to the gentry now, at all events. You cannot deny, brother, that it is all the fashion at the present day.”

“ Which is tantamount to saying,” responded the stubborn disputant, “ that it will be out of fashion to-morrow. Aristocratic indeed!—why, the ‘ haberdashers’ apprentices’ will be shooting in every tea-garden round London before the summer is over. ‘ And what for no?’ as Meg Dods would say: the recreation is just within reach of their ability, pecuniary and mental. And here in the country, where everybody that can command a cow’s grass can set up the butts and shoot with double ends, as you call them, why, if you expect to keep your sport to yourself, Miss Fanny, you are mistaken.”

“ At all events, Horace, it is classical,” said Miss Fanny, pushed to her last defence; “ and that, to a traveller just from Greece, ought to be some recommendation. How often have I heard you say, that ‘ Philoctetes’ is the second tragedy of the world,—that which approaches next to Lear in the great dramatic purpose of rousing pity and indignation! And what is ‘ Philoctetes’ about, from first to last, but the bow and arrows of Hercules? And where in all Homer—all Pope’s Homer I mean (for I do not know the original—I wish I did), can we find more beautiful lines than those which describe Ulysses bending the bow? I will match my quotation against yours, brother, if you will consent to rest the cause upon that issue,” continued Frances, beginning to repeat, with

saving in return: and he certainly joined Matthew Locke in producing “ Macbeth ” with that grandest music; helped Dryden to alter—that is to spoil—“ The Tempest; ” had one of the two theatrical patents; introduced painted scenes, and was buried close to Chaucer.

great animation and gracefulness, the verses to which she had alluded : —

“ ‘ And now his well-known bow the master bore,
Turn’d on all sides, and view’d it o’er and o’er :
Lest time or worms had done the weapon wrong,
Its owner absent, and untried so long.
While some deriding : — How he turns the bow !
Some other like it sure the man must know,
Or else would copy ; or in bows he deals ;
Perhaps he makes them — or perhaps he steals.

* * * * *

Heedless he heard them, but disdain’d reply ;
The bow perusing with exactest eye.
Then, as some heavenly minstrel, taught to sing
High notes responsive to the trembling string,
To some new strain when he adapts the lyre,
Or the dumb lute refits with vocal wire,
Relaxes, strains, and draws them to and fro ;
So the great master drew the mighty bow :
And drew with ease. One hand aloft display’d
The bending horns, and one the string essay’d.
From his essaying hand the string let fly
Twang’d short and sharp, like the shrill swallow’s cry.
A general horror ran through all the race,
Sunk was each heart, and pale was every face.
Signs from above ensued : th’ unfolding sky
In lightning burst ; Jove thunder’d from on high.
Fired at the call of Heaven’s almighty lord,
He snatch’d the shaft that glitter’d on the board :
(Fast by, the rest lay sleeping in the sheath
But soon to fly, the messengers of death.)
Now sitting as he was, the cord he drew,
Through every ringlet levelling his view :
Then notch’d the shaft, released, and gave it wing ;
The wizzing arrow vanish’d from the string,
Sung on direct and threaded every ring.
The solid gate its fury scarcely bounds ;
Pierced through and through, the solid gate resounds.’ ”

“ Bravo, Fanchon ! ” exclaimed Horace, as his sister paused, half blushing at the display into which the energy of her defence had provoked her, — “ Bravo ! my own dear little sister ! Beautiful lines they are, and most beautifully recited ; and Pope’s, sure enough — none of Broome’s or Fenton’s botchery. One may know the handiwork of that most delicate artist, meet it where one will.

“ ‘ Or the dumb lute refits with vocal wire.’ ”

Who but the tuneful hunchback of Twickenham could have put such words to such a thought ? Then the repetition of the same phrase, like the repetitions in Milton, or the returns upon the air in Handel ! Thank you a thousand times, my dearest Fanny, for such a proof of your good taste. I’ll forgive the archery upon the strength of it.”

“ And the Apollo, brother,” pursued Fanchon, following

up her victory, — “was not he an archer, the Apollo Belvidere?”

“Nay, Fanchon,” replied her brother, laughing, “do not claim too much; that’s uncertain.”

“Uncertain! How can you say so? Don’t you remember the first line of Mr. Milman’s poem, — that matchless prize poem, which Mrs. Siddons is said to have recited in the Louvre, at the foot of the statue, and in presence of the author; one of the finest compliments, as I have heard you say, ever paid to man or to poet:

“ ‘ Heard ye the arrow hurtle in the sky?
— Heard ye the dragon monster’s deathful cry?’ ”

“Is not ‘hurtle’ a fine word? And are not these great authorities?”

“Sophocles, and Homer, and the Apollo, and Mr. Milman? Yes, indeed they are; and under their sanction I give you full leave to win the Silver Arrow.”

“And you will try to win it yourself, Horace? I do not mean to-day, but at the next meeting.”

“No, Fanchon! That is too much to promise.”

“But you will go to the archery with me?”

“Yes; for I wish to see many old friends — amongst the rest, the kind and excellent owner of Oakley, and his noble and charming lady; and, as I said before, you have my full permission to bring home the Silver Arrow.”

“I should like to do so of all things,” replied Fanchon, “in spite of your contempt; from which I would lay my best arrow that you will soon be converted, and my second-best that I could name the converter. But my winning the prize is quite out of hope,” continued the young lady, who, thoroughly unlucky in her choice of subjects, had no sooner run to earth one of Horace’s prejudices, than she contrived to start another: “there is no hope whatever of my winning the prize; for though I can shoot very well here and at the other house——”

“At the other house,” thought Horace, almost starting, as the staring red mansion, of which he had lost sight during the archery dispute, and Mr. Page, with all his iniquities, passed before his mind’s eye, — “the other house! Are they as intimate as that comes to?”

“And can even beat Lucy,” pursued poor Fanchon.

"Lucy again!" thought her brother.

"When we are by ourselves," continued she; "yet before strangers I am so awkward, and nervous, and frightened, that I always fail. I should like dearly to win the arrow, though, and you would like that I should win it, I am sure you would," added she; "and Lucy says, that if I could but think of something else, and forget that people were looking at me, she is sure I should succeed. I do really believe that Lucy would rather I should win it than herself, because she knows it would give so much pleasure, not only to me, but to mamma."

"Nothing but Lucy!" again thought Horace. "It seems as if there were nothing to do in this life but to shoot at a target, and nobody in the world but Miss Lucy Page. — Pray, Fanchette," said he aloud, "what brought about the reconciliation between Mr. Page's family and ours? When I left England we had not spoken for years."

"Why, very luckily, brother, just after you went abroad," rejoined Fanchette, "one of the tenants behaved very unjustly, and insolently, and ungratefully to mamma; and when the steward threatened to punish him for his misconduct, he went immediately to Mr. Page, knowing that he had been at variance with our poor father, to claim his patronage and protection. However, Mr. Page was not the man to see a woman and a widow, an unprotected female, as he said ——"

"He might have said, a lady, Miss Fanny!" again thought the ungrateful Horace ——

"Imposed upon," continued Fanny. "So he came straight to dear mamma, offered her his best services on this occasion and any other, and has been our kindest friend and adviser ever since."

"I dare say," said the incorrigible Horace: "and Miss Lucy was your schoolfellow! What is she like now? I remember her a pale, sickly, insignificant, awkward girl. Whom does she resemble? The bluff-looking father, or the vulgar mamma?"

"You are very provoking brother," replied poor Fanny, "and hardly deserve any answer. But she is just exactly like this rose. She's the prettiest girl in the county; every body allows that."

"Yes, a true country beauty, a full-blown cabbage rose," again thought Horace; who had not condescended to observe

that the half-blown flower which his sister had presented to him, and which he was at that instant swinging unconsciously in his hand, was of the delicate maiden blush, made to blow out of its season (every gardener knows how), by cutting off the buds in the spring. "A full-blown blowzy beauty, as vulgar and as forward as both her parents, encouraging and patronising my sister, forsooth! — she, the daughter of a tallow-merchant! — just as the father protects my dear mother. Really," thought Mr. Vernon, "our family is much indebted to them!" And with these thoughts in his mind, and contempt in his heart, he set off with Frances to the archery-ground.

On arriving at the destined spot, all other feelings were suspended in admiration of the extraordinary beauty of the scene. Horace, a traveller of no ordinary taste, felt its charm the more strongly from the decided English character impressed on every object. The sun was rather veiled than shrouded by light vapoury clouds, from which he every now and then emerged in his fullest glory, casting all the magic of light and shadow on the majestic oaks of the park, — oaks scarcely to be rivalled in the royal forests, — and on the venerable old English mansion which stood embosomed amongst its own rich woodland. The house was of the days of Elizabeth, and one of the most beautiful erections of that age of picturesque domestic architecture. Deep bay-windows of various shapes were surmounted by steep intersecting roofs and bits of gable ends, and quaint fantastic cornices and tall turret-like chimneys, which gave a singular grace and lightness to the building. Two of those chimneys, high and diamond-shaped, divided so as to admit the long line of sky between them, and yet united at distant intervals, linked together as it were by a chain-work of old masonry, might be a study at once for the painter and the architect. The old open porch too, almost a room, and the hall with its carved chimney-piece and its arched benches, the wainscoted chambers, the oak staircases, the upstairs chapel, (perhaps oratory might be the fitter word,) the almost conventual architecture of some of the arched passages and the cloistered inner courts, were in perfect keeping; and the admirable taste which had abstained from admitting any thing like modern ornament was felt by the whole party, and by none more strongly than by our fastidious

traveller. He immediately fell into conversation with Mr. Oakley, the kind and liberal proprietor of the place, and his charming lady, (old friends of his family,) and was listening with interest to his detail of the iniquities of some former Duke of St. Albans, who, renting the mansion* as being convenient for the exercise of his function of hereditary grand falconer, had, in a series of quarrels with another powerful nobleman (the then Duke of Beaufort), extirpated the moor-fowl which had previously abounded on the neighbouring heath, when a startling clap on the shoulders roused his attention, and that nightmare of his imagination, Mr. Page, stood before him in an agony of good-will, noisier and more boisterous than ever.

Not only Mr. Page, shaking both his hands with a swing that almost dislocated his shoulders, but Mrs. Page, ruddy, portly, and smiling, the very emblem of peace and plenty, and Mrs. Dinah Page, Mr. Page's unmarried sister, a grim, gaunt, raw-boned woman, equally vulgar-looking in a different way, and both attired in the full shroud uniform, stood before him. At a little distance, talking to his sister, and evidently congratulating her on his return, stood Lucy, simply but exquisitely dressed, a light embroidery of oak-leaves and acorns having replaced the bows which made the other young ladies seem in an eternal flutter of green ribands; and so delicate, so graceful, so modest, so sweet, so complete an exemplification of innocent and happy youthfulness, that, as Horace turned to address her and caught his sister's triumphant eye, the words of Fletcher rose almost to his lips —

“As a rose at fairest,
Neither a bud, nor blown.”

Never was a more instantaneous conversion. He even, feeling that his first reception had been ungracious, went back

* There is another still more interesting story connected with Oakley. An ancestor of the present proprietor was lost, bewildered, benighted during some tremendous storm on the heath before alluded to, and, being of delicate health and nervous habits, had fairly given up all hope of reaching his own house alive; when suddenly the church clock of the neighbouring town of W—— striking four, happened to make itself heard through the wintry storm, and gave him sufficient intimation of his position to guide him safely home. In memory of this interposition, which he considered as nothing less than providential, Mr. Oakley assigned forty shillings a year in payment of a man to ring a bell at four o'clock every morning in the parish church of W——: and by that tenure the estate is still held. This is literally true. A circumstance somewhat similar, occurring to the proprietor of Bamborough Castle, in Northumberland, is said to have been the cause of the erection of the famous light-house which has warned so many vessels from that dangerous coast.

to shake hands over again with Mr. Page, and to thank him for his services and attentions to his mother during his absence ; and when his old opponent declared with much warmth that any little use he might have been of was doubly repaid by the honour of being employed by so excellent a lady, and by the unspeakable advantage of her notice to his Lucy, Horace really wondered how he could ever have disliked him.

The business of the day now began — “ Much ado about nothing,” perhaps — but still an animated and pleasant scene. The pretty processions of young ladies and nicely-equipped gentlemen marching to the sound of the bugle from target to target, the gay groups of visitors sauntering in the park, and the outer circle of country people, delighted spectators of the sport, formed altogether a picture of great variety and interest.

Lucy and Frances were decidedly the best shots on the ground ; and Horace, who was their constant attendant, and who felt his aversion to the sport melting away, he could not very well tell how, was much pleased with the interest with which either young markswoman regarded the success of the other. Lucy had, as she declared, by accident, once lodged her arrow in the very centre of the target, and was as far before Frances as Frances was before the rest. But Lucy, although the favourite candidate, seemed less eager for the triumph than her more timid friend, and turned willingly to other subjects.

“ You are admiring my beautiful dress, Mr. Vernon, as well you may,” exclaimed she, as she caught his eye resting on her beautiful figure : “ but it is Frances who ought to blush, for this delicate embroidery is her work and her taste, one of a thousand kindnesses which she and dear Mrs. Vernon have been showering upon me during the last six years. She did not act quite fairly by me in this matter, though ; for she should have allowed me, though I cannot paint with the needle as she does, to try my skill in copying her beautiful work, — and I will, against the next meeting, although it will be only displaying my inferiority. I never saw this dress, or had a notion of it, till last night, when she was forced to send it to be tried on. You do not know your sister yet !”

“ I am better acquainted with her than you think I am,” exclaimed Horace. “ We have been holding a long argument this morning : and nothing, you know, draws out a young lady

like a little contradiction. I must not tell you the subject, for you would certainly be on Frances's side."

"Yes! certainly I should," interrupted the fair lady; "be the subject what it might — right or wrong, I should take part with dear Frances. But you must not quarrel with her — no, not even in jest, — she loves you so, and has so longed for your return. I doubt your knowing her yet, even although you have had the advantage of a dispute; which is, as you say, an excellent recipe for drawing out a young lady. I do not think you know half her merits yet — but you will find her out in time. She is so timid, that sometimes she conceals her powers from those she loves best; and sometimes from mere nervousness they desert her. I am glad that she has shot so well to-day; for, trifling as the object is, (and yet it is a pretty English amusement, an old-fashioned national sport — is it not?) — trifling as the object may be, every thing that tends to give her confidence in herself is of consequence to her own comfort in society. What a shot was that!" continued she, as Frances's arrow lodged in the target, and the bugles struck up in honour of "a gold" — "What a shot! and how ashamed she is at her own success! Now you shall see me fail and not be ashamed of my failure." And she shot accordingly, and *did* fail; and another round, with nearly equal skill on the part of Frances, and equal want of it on that of her friend, had reversed their situations, and put Miss Vernon at the top of the list: so that when the company adjourned to their early dinner, Frances was the favourite candidate, although the two young ladies were, in sporting phrase, neck and neck.

After dinner, however, when the gentlemen joined the ladies and the sports recommenced, Miss Page was nowhere to be found. Mrs. Page, on her daughter being called for, announced to the secretary that Lucy had abandoned the contest; and on being anxiously questioned by Horace and Frances as to the cause of her absence, she avowed that she could not very well tell what was become of her, but that she fancied she was gone with her father and Aunt Dinah in search of the Ladye Fountain, a celebrated spring, situate somewhere or other in the seven hundred acres of fir-woods which united the fertile demesne of Oakley to another fine estate belonging to the same gentleman; a spring which Aunt Dinah had remembered in her childhood, before the fir-trees were planted, and had taken

a strong fancy to see again. "And so Lucy," pursued Mrs. Page, "has left the archery and her chance of the Silver Arrow, and has even run away from Miss Vernon to go exploring the woods with Aunt Dinah."

"She is gone that Frances may gain the prize, sweet creature that she is!" thought our friend Horace.

Two hours afterwards, Horace Vernon found his way through the dark and fragrant fir plantations to a little romantic glade, where the setting sun glanced between the deep red trunks of the trees on a clear spring, meandering over a bed of mossy turf inlaid with wild thyme, and dwarf heath, and the delicate harebell, illumining a figure fair as a wood-nymph, seated on the fantastic roots of the pines, with Mr. Page on one side and Aunt Dinah on the other. "You have brought me good news," exclaimed Lucy, springing forward to meet him; "Frances, dear, dear Frances, has won the Silver Arrow!"

"I have brought you the Silver Arrow for yourself," replied Horace, offering her the little prize token, quite forgetting how exceedingly contemptible that prize had appeared to him that very morning; or, if remembering it, thinking only that nothing could be really contemptible which gave occasion to so pretty and so unostentatious a sacrifice of "a feather in the cap of youth."

"But how can that be, when, even before I declined the contest, Frances had beaten me? The prize is hers, and must be hers. I cannot take it; and even if it were mine, it would give me no pleasure. It was her success that was my triumph. Pray, take the arrow back again. Pray, pray, my dear father, make Mr. Vernon take the arrow."

"How am I to make him, Lucy?" inquired her father, laughing.

"It is yours, I assure you," replied Horace; "and Frances cannot take it, because she has just such another of her own. Did not you know that there were two prizes? — one for the greatest number of good shots, — the highest score, as Mr. Secretary calls it, which, owing probably to your secession, has been adjudged to Frances; and another for the best shot of all, which was fairly won by you. And now, my dear Mr. Page, I, in my turn, shall apply to you to make your daughter take the arrow; and then I must appeal to her to honour me with her hand for the two first sets of quadrilles,

and as many more dances as she can spare to me during the evening."

And the young lady smiled very graciously, and they danced together half the night.

"Well, brother," asked Frances, as they were returning home together from Oakley Park, "how have you been amused at the archery meeting?"

"Hem!" ejaculated Horace; "that's a saucy question. Nevertheless, you shall have the truth. I liked it better than I expected. The place is beautiful, and the sport, after all, national and English."

"Then you mean to become an archer?"

"Perhaps I may."

"And to win the next Silver Arrow?"

"If I can."

"There's a dear brother! And how did you like our good friend Mr. Page? Did not you find him national and English also?"

"That's another saucy question, Miss Fanchon," again exclaimed Horace: "but I am in a truth-telling humour. I liked your good friend exceedingly; and heartily agree with him in thinking that the admission of the country people, through the kindness of Mr. Oakley and Lady Margaret, mixing the variety, and the crowd, and the animation of a fair with the elegance of a *fête champêtre*, formed by far the prettiest part of the scene. He is very English, and I like him all the better for so being," continued Horace manfully. "And now, my dear little Fanny, to forestall that sauciest question of all, which I know to be coming, I give you warning before our good cousin here, that I will not tell you how I like Mr. Page's fair daughter until I am in a fair way of knowing how Mr. Page's fair daughter likes me."

"Thank Heaven!" thought Frances; "that was all that I wanted to know."

"And so, ladies both," added Horace, as the carriage drove up to the door of the Hall and he handed them out, — "it being now three o'clock in the morning, I have the honour of wishing you good-night."

Note. — This little tale of the Archery Ground is longer than is usual with me, — not for the benefit of its present race of readers, who may fairly be presumed to have had enough of the subject in the county newspapers and in country conversation, but because, if a few stray copies of a trifling book may be presumed to live for ten or a dozen years, it will then convey that sort of amusement with which we now and then contemplate some engraving of a costume once fashionable, laughing saucily at our former selves, as we think — Did I really ever wear such a bonnet? or such a sleeve? In proportion to the popularity of this pretty amusement will be its transiency. The moment that it becomes common, (and that moment is approaching fast,) it will pass out of fashion and be forgotten. Nothing is so dangerous in this country as a too great and too sudden reputation. The reaction is overwhelming. We are a strange people, we English, and are sure to knock down our idols, and avenge on their innocent heads the sin of our own idolatry.

In the mean while, archery has its day, (and even to have had its day, when that melancholy change of taste shall arrive, will be something,) — and it has also a minstrel, of whom it has more than common cause to be proud. Every body knows that there is nothing more pleasant than the trifling of those whose trifling is merely a relaxation from graver and greater things. Now, it happens that in these parts — not indeed in the Oakley Park Club, but in one not a hundred miles distant — they are lucky enough to possess a person eminent in many ways, and good-humoured enough to have composed for the amusement of his neighbours one of the pleasantest ballads that has been seen since the days of Robin Hood. King Richard and Friar Tuck might have chanted it in the hermit's cell, and doubtless would have done so had they been aware of its existence. I cannot resist the temptation of quoting a few stanzas, in hopes of prevailing on the author (it is printed for private distribution) to make public the rest. It purports to be the Legend of the Pinner of Wakefield — I presume (although it is not so stated in the preface) of “George-a-Greene,” who held that station, and whose exploits form the subject of a very pleasant old play. It begins as follows:—

"The Pindar of Wakefield is my style,
And what I list I write;
Whilom a clerk of Oxenforde,
But now a wandering wight.

"When birds sing free in bower and tree,
And sports are to the fore,
With fiddle and long-bow forth I pace,
As Phœbus did of yore.

"The twang of both best liketh me
By those fair spots of earth,
Where Chaucer* conn'd his minstrelsy,
And Alfred drew his birth.

"And whatsoever chance conceit
Within my brain doth light,
It trickleth to my fingers' ends,
And needs I must indite.

"Even thus my godfather of Greece,
Whose worthy name I bear,
Of a cock, or a bull, or a whale would sing,
And seldom stopp'd to care.

"For whoso shall gainsay,' quoth he,
'My sovereign will and law,
Or carpeth at my strain divine
In hope to sniff some flaw,
Certes, I wreck of the lousie knave
As an eagle of a daw.'

"Yet whomsoe'er in wrestling ring
He spied to bear him strong,
Or whom he knew a good man and true,
He clapp'd him in a song.

"Like him, it listeth me to tell
Some fyte in former years,
Of the merry men all and yeomen tall
Who were my jovial feres."

And so on to the end of the chapter.

To illustrate Davenant's expression as quoted by Horace, I copy from a very accurate recorder of the antiquities of the metropolis an account of Finsbury Fields, in the days when haberdashers' apprentices and other city youths resorted to them for the purpose of archery, — the remote and gorgeous days of the Maiden Queen.

It is very well known to every one who is at all acquainted with the ancient history or topography of London, that the northern part of Finsbury Fields — that is to say, from the present Bunhill Row almost to Islington — was once divided into a number of large irregular pieces of ground, enclosed by banks and hedges, constituting the places of exercise for the city archers. Along the boundaries of each of these fields

* Chaucer, it is said, resided at Donnington Castle: Alfred was born at Wantage. Hence a clue to the locality of the ballad.

were set the various marks for shooting, formerly known under the names of targets, butts, prickes, and rovers; all which were to be shot at with different kinds of arrows. They were also distinguished by their own respective titles, which were derived either from their situation, their proprietors, the person by whom they were erected, the name of some famous archer, or perhaps from some circumstance now altogether unknown. These names, however, were often sufficiently singular; for in an ancient map of Finsbury Fields, yet extant, there occur the titles of "Martin's Monkie," the "Red Dragon," "Theefe in the Hedge," and the "Mercer's Maid." Indeed, one of these names, not less remarkable, was given so late as the year 1746, in consequence of a person, named Pitfield, having destroyed an ancient shooting-butt, and being obliged to restore it by order of an act passed in 1632: the Artillery Company, to which it belonged, engraved upon the new mark the significant title of "Pitfield's Repentance." The general form of the Finsbury shooting-butts was that of a lofty pillar of wood, carved with various devices of human figures and animals, gaily painted and gilt: but there was also another kind, of which some specimens have remained until almost the present day. These consisted of a broad and high sloping bank of green turf, having tall wings of stout wooden paling, spreading out on each side. Such shooting-butts, however, were chiefly for the practice of the more inexperienced archers, and not for those who, like Master Shallow's "old Double, would have clapt in the clout at twelve score, and carried you a forehand shaft at fourteen, and fourteen and a half." Upon this bank of turf was hung the target, and sometimes the side paling stretched out so as to form a long narrow lane for the archers to stand in; the principal intent of them being to protect spectators or passers-by from the danger of a random arrow, or an unskilful marksman: the latter, however, if in the Artillery Company, was not responsible for any person's life, if, previously to letting fly his arrow, he exclaimed "Fast!" The marks were erected at various distances from the shooting-places, some being so near as seventy-three yards, and others as far distant as sixteen score and two; though the ancient English bow is said sometimes to have been effective at so immense a distance as four hundred yards, or nearly a quarter of a mile. The fields in which these butts were

placed, were, in the time of Elizabeth, a morass, subdivided by so many dikes and rivulets, that the ground was often new-made where the bowmen assembled, and bridges were thrown over the ditches to form a road from one field to another. Like the *Slough of Despond*, however, they swallowed so many cart-loads — yea, waggon-loads — of materials for filling them up, that old Stow once declared his belief to be, that if Moor Fields were made level with the battlements of the city wall, they would be little the drier, such was the marshy nature of the ground.

It was in this place that the various troops of archers which formed the celebrated pageant of the 17th of September, 1583, assembled previously to that famous spectacle, habited in those sumptuous dresses by which the bowmen of Elizabeth's reign were so eminently distinguished. There came Barlow, Duke of Shoreditch ; Covell, Marquess of Clerkenwell ; Wood, the Marshal of the Archers ; the Earl of Pancras ; the Marquesses of St. John's Wood, Hoxton, Shacklewell, and many other excellent marksmen, dignified by similar popular titles, long since forgotten. There was such glittering of green velvet and satin, such flapping of the coloured damask ensigns of the leaders, such displaying of wooden shields covered with gay blazonry, such quaintly-dressed masquers, such pageant-devices of the various London parishes which contributed to the show — such melodious shouts, songs, flights of whistling arrows, and winding of horns, — that, as an author of the time truly says, "such a delight was taken by the witnesses thereof, as they wist not for a while where they were." But for those who would enjoy this pageant to perfection, let them turn over the leaves of Marshal Wood's very rare tract of "The Bowman's Glory," which [really] blazed with his minute description of the dresses and proceedings. Many a deed of archery, well befitting the fame of Robin Hood himself, was that day recorded upon the Finsbury shooting-butts ; many of the competitors repeatedly hit the white, and more than one split in pieces the arrow of a successful shooter.

It is clear from the admirable dialogue between Silence and Shallow, alluded to above, (and Shakspeare is the best authority for every thing, especially for English manners,) that in the days of Elizabeth at least, archery was, as the hero of my little story truly said, a popular, and not an aristocratic amusement.

THE YOUNG PAINTER.

THE death of a friend so ardently admired, so tenderly beloved, as Henry Warner, left poor Louis nearly as desolate as he had been when deprived in so fearful a manner of his early instructor, the good Abbé. Bijou, too, seemed again, so far as his nature permitted, sorrow-stricken ; and Mrs. Duval and Stephen Lane, both after their several fashions, sympathised with the grief of the affectionate boy. The fond mother fretted, and the worthy butcher scolded amain ; and this species of consolation had at first the usual effect of worrying, rather than of comforting, its unfortunate object. After a while, however, matters mended. Instead of nursing his depression in gloomy inaction, as had been the case after his former calamity, Louis had from the first followed the dying injunction of his lamented friend, by a strenuous application to drawing, in the rules of which he was now sufficiently grounded to pursue his studies with perceptible improvement ; and time and industry proved in his case, as in so many others, the best restorers of youthful spirits. His talent too began to be recognised ; and even Stephen Lane had given up, half grumblingly, his favourite project of taking him as an apprentice, and did not oppose himself so strenuously as heretofore to the connection which Mrs. Duval now began to perceive between her own dream of the pot of gold and Louis' discovery of the paint-pot. "To be sure," thought honest Stephen, "women will be foolish and fanciful, even the best of 'em. But I've noticed, by times, that every now and then one of their silliest fancies shall come true, just out of contrariness. So it's as well to humour them : and besides, if as my Margaret thinks, Madam St. Eloy should be taking a fancy to the boy, it would be as good as finding a pot of gold in right earnest. Madam must be near upon seventy by this time. Ay, she was a fine-grown young lady, prancing about upon her bay pony, when first I went to live with Master Jackson — and that's fifty years ago : and she's a single woman still, and has no kindred that ever I heard of ; for her brother, poor gentleman, left neither chick nor child : and she must be worth a power of money, besides the old house and the great Nunnery estate

— a mort of money, and nobody to leave it to but just as she fancies ! I scorn legacy-hunting,” pursued the good butcher, checking and correcting the train of his own thoughts ; “ but howsomdever, if the old lady should take a liking to Louis, why she might go farther and fare worse. That’s all I shall say in the business.”

Madam St. Eloy was a person of no small consequence in Belford, where she spent regularly and liberally the larger part of her large income. She lived not in the town, but in an ancient mansion called The Nunnery, just across the river, erected, it is to be presumed, on the site of an old monastic establishment, and still retaining popularly its monastic name, in spite of the endeavours of its Huguenot possessors to substitute the more protestant title of “ The Place.”

Very harshly must its conventual appellation have sounded in the ears of the founder of this branch of the St. Eloy family, a Huguenot refugee of Elizabeth’s days, whose son, having become connected with that most anti-catholic monarch James the First, by marrying a lady about the person of Anne of Denmark, and who had been in his childhood the favourite attendant of Prince Charles, had bequeathed to his successors all the chivalrous loyalty, the devotion, and the prejudices of a cavalier of the Civil Wars ; prejudices which, in the person of their latest descendant, Madeleine de St. Eloy, had been strengthened and deepened by her having lost, in the course of one campaign, an only brother and a betrothed lover, when fighting for the cause of French loyalty in the early part of the revolutionary war.

This signal misfortune decided the fate and the character of the heiress of the St. Eloys. Sprung from a proud and stately generation, high-minded, and reserved, she, on becoming mistress of herself and her property, withdrew almost entirely from the ordinary commerce of the world, and led, in her fine old mansion, a life little less retired than that of a protestant nun.

No place could be better adapted for such a seclusion. Separated from the town of Belford by the great river, and the rich and fertile chain of meadows, and from the pretty village, to which it more immediately belonged, by a double avenue almost like a grove of noble oaks, it was again defended on the landward side by high walls surrounding the building, and leading through tall iron gates of elaborate workmanship into

a spacious court ; whilst the south front opened into a garden enclosed by equally high walls on either side, and bounded by the river, to which it descended by a series of terraces of singular beauty, planted with evergreens and espaliers, mixed with statues and sun dials and vases, and old-fashioned flowers in matchless luxuriance and perfection.

Nothing could exceed the view of Belford from this terraced garden. On the one side, the grey ruins of the abbey and their deep-arched gateway ; on the other, the airy elegance of the white-fronted terraces and crescents : between these extreme points, and harmonising — toning down, as it were, the one into the other, the old town so richly diversified in form and colour, with the fine Gothic towers and tapering spires of the churches, intermixed with trees and gardens, backed by woody hills, and having for a foreground meadows alive with cattle, studded with clumps of oak, and fringed with poplars and willows, leading to the clear and winding river — the great river of England, with its picturesque old bridge, and its ever-varying population of barges and boats. By far the finest view of Belford was from the terrace gardens of the Nunnery.

Very few, however, were admitted to participate in its beauties. Miss, or, as she rather choose to be called, Mrs. St. Eloy, gradually dropped even the few acquaintances which the secluded habits of her family had permitted them to cultivate amongst the most aristocratic of the country gentry, and, except a numerous train of old domestics and an occasional visit from the clergyman of the parish, or her own physician and apothecary, rarely admitted a single person within her gates.

Still more rarely did she herself pass the precincts of the Nunnery. Before the abolition of the races, indeed, she had thought it a sort of duty to parade once round the course in a coach thirty years old at the very least, drawn by four heavy black horses, with their long tails tied up, not very much younger, driven by a well-wigged coachmen and *two* veteran postilions (a redundancy of guidance which those steady quadrupeds were far from requiring), and followed by three footmen mounted on steeds of the same age and breed. But the cessation of the races deprived Belford of the view of this solemn procession, which the children of that time used to contemplate with mingled awe and admiration, (the rising generation now-

a-days would probably be so irreverent as to laugh at such a display,) and the Nunnery coach, although the stud of black horses was still kept up, and hardly issued from the court-yard, unless occasionally to do honour to some very aristocratic high sheriff, or to attend the funeral of a neighbouring nobleman; the parish church which Mrs. St. Eloy regularly attended being so near, that nothing but age or infirmity could have suggested the use of a carriage.

Of age or infirmity the good lady, in spite of Stephen's calculation, bore little trace. She was still a remarkable fine woman, with a bright eye, a clear olive complexion, and a slender yet upright and vigorous figure. Little as she mingled in society, I have seldom known a person of her age so much admired by either sex. The ladies all joined in praising her old-fashioned, picturesque, half-mourning costume, never changed since first assumed in token of grief for the loss of her lover, and the stately but graceful courtesy of her manner on any casual encounter; whilst the gentlemen paid her the less acceptable and more questionable compliment of besieging her with offers of marriage, which, with a characteristic absence of vanity, she laid entirely to the score of the Nunnery Estate. It was said that three in one family, a father and two sons—all men of high connections, and all in one way or another as much in want of money as any three gentlemen need be—had made their proposals in the course of that summer during which she completed her thirteenth lustrum.

Certain it is, that the lapse of time by no means diminished her matrimonial qualifications in the eyes of such speculating bachelors as were looking about for a *bon parti*; and it is at least equally certain, that no woman was ever less likely to fall into the nuptial trap than Mrs. St. Eloy. She was protected from the danger by every circumstance of character and of situation: by her high notions of decorum and propriety—by real purity of mind—by the romance of an early attachment—by the pride of an illustrious descent—by her long and unbroken seclusion, and by the strong but minute chains of habit with which she had so completely environed herself, that the breach of etiquette in a German court would not have been more striking than any infraction of the rules of this maiden household.

All went as if by clock-work in the Nunnery. At eight

Mrs. St. Eloy rose, and proceeded to a room called the chapel, built on the consecrated ground of the convent church, where Mrs. Dorothy Adams, an ancient spinster who filled a post in the family between companion and lady's-maid, read prayers to the assembled servants. Then they adjourned to the breakfast-parlour, where, on a small japanned table, and in cups of pea-green china not much larger than thimbles, Mrs. Dorothy made tea. Then Mrs. St. Eloy adjourned to the audit-room, where the housekeeper, butler, and steward were severally favoured with an audience; and here she relieved the sick poor, (for she was a most charitable and excellent person,) partly by certain family medicines of her own compounding, which were for such things exceedingly harmless—that is to say, I never heard of any body that was actually killed by them; partly by the far more useful donation of money. Here also she received other petitioners and complaints, who were accustomed to resort to her as a sort of female justice of the peace for redress of grievances; an office which she performed—as woman, better partisans than arbitrators, are apt to perform such offices—with much zeal but little discretion, so that she got into divers scrapes, out of which her money and her attorney were fain to help her. Then she adjourned to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Dorothy read aloud the newspaper, especially all that related to war and battle, whilst her mistress sighed over her netting. Then, weather permitting, she took a walk in the garden. Then she dressed. Then at three o'clock she dined, sitting down alone (for Mrs. Dorothy did not partake of that meal with her lady) to such a banquet as might have feasted the mayor and corporation of Belford—I had almost said, of London—attended by the old butler, Mr. Gilbert by name, in his powdered pigtail, his silk stockings and flowered satin waistcoat, and three footmen liveried in blue and yellow. Then, fatigued with the labours of the day, she took a gentle nap. Then, at six precisely, she drank tea; after which it was Mrs. Adams's business to lose, if she could, several hits at backgammon. Then, at nine, she supped; at half-past, prayers were read in the chapel; and at ten precisely the whole household went to bed.

The monotony of this life was somewhat solaced by a passion for such birds as are commonly seen in cages and aviaries. Mrs. St. Eloy was noted especially for the breeding of canaries,

whose noise, atrocious in most places, served here at least to break the conventual silence of the mansion ; and for the education of linnets and goldfinches, to which, with unwearied patience, she taught a variety of such tricks as drawing their own water in a little bucket, fetching and carrying a bit of straw, and so forth.

Encouraged by success, she had lately undertaken the more difficult task of communicating musical instruction to a bullfinch, which already piped "God save the King" almost as well as the barrel-organ from which it learned, and was now about to enter upon the popular air of "Robin Adair," as performed by the same instrument. The bird itself, and the little organ from which it gathered the tune, were placed, for the sake of separation from the canaries which filled the drawing-room, in a spacious gallery forming one of the wings of the house and running over the laundry, an airy and beautiful apartment which Mrs. St. Eloy called the museum ; and her pleasure in this occupation caused her to infringe more frequently on the long-established rules for the employment of her time than she had been known to do in the whole course of her spinstership. It was also the cause of her acquaintance with Louis Duval.

The little bird, to whom she and Mrs. Dorothy Adams had somehow given the unromantic name of Bobby, was so tame, that they were accustomed to let him out of his cage, and allow him to perch on the barrel-organ during the time of his music lesson. A pretty bird he was, with his grey back, and his red breast, and his fine intelligent eye ; a pretty bird, and exceedingly pretty-mannered : he would bow and bend, and turn his glossy black head to one side or the other, and when offered a piece of sugar, (the cate he loved best,) would advance and recede with a very piquant mixture of shyness and confidence, afraid to take it from his lady's fair hand, and yet so nearly taking, that if thrown towards him he would pick it up before it reached the table. A charming bird was Bobby, and such a pet as never bird was before. I will venture to say, that Mrs. St. Eloy would rather have lost a thousand pounds than that bullfinch.

One day, however, that misfortune did seem likely to befall her. It was on a fine morning towards the end of May, when the windows of the west gallery, which looked to the garden,

were open, Mrs. Adams grinding the barrel-organ, and Bobby perched upon it practising "Robin Adair," that the old butler, opening the door with unwonted suddenness, startled the bird, who flew out of the window and was half-way towards the river before the astounded females had recovered the use of their tongues. The first use to which they put those members was of course a duett of scolding for the benefit of the butler; but as vituperation would not recover their pet, they intermitted their lecture and ordered a general muster in the garden in chase of the stray favourite.

There he was, amidst the white-blossomed cherry-trees and the espaliers garlanded with their pink blossoms; now perched on a sweetbriar; now flitting across a yew hedge; now glancing this way, now darting that; now escaping from under the extended hand; now soaring as high again as the house. Footmen, coachmen, postilions, housemaids, gardeners, dairy-maids, laundry-women, cook, scullion, housekeeper; the luckless butler, Mrs. Dorothy, and Mrs. St. Eloy, — all joined in the pursuit, which for some time, owing to the coquetry of Bobby, who really seemed balancing between the joys of liberty and the comforts of home, had the proper mixture of hope and fear, of anxiety and uncertainty, that belongs to such a scene; but at last a tremendous squall, uttered from the lungs of a newly-hired cockney housemaid, who had trod on a water-snake and expected nothing less than death to ensue, — which squall was reinforced from the mere power of sympathy, by all the females of the party, — produced a species of chorus so loud and discordant, and so unacceptable to the musical taste of our accomplished bullfinch, that the catastrophe which from the first Mrs. St. Eloy had dreaded immediately took place — the bird flew across the river, and alighted amongst some fine old hawthorns in the opposite meadow.

The Nunnery boat was (as in such cases always happens) locked up in the boat-house, and the key in the gamekeeper's pocket, and the keeper Heaven knew where; the bridge was half a mile off, and not a soul within sight, or a craft on the river except one little green boat — and that boat empty — moored close to the hawthorns on the opposite side. The recovery of Bobby seemed hopeless. Whilst, however, some were running to the bridge, and others attempting to catch sight of the stray bird, our friend Louis emerged from the

May bushes, bullfinch in hand, jumped into his little boat, darted across the river, leaped ashore, and, with a smiling courtesy, a gentle grace, which won every female heart in the garden, restored the trembling favourite to its delighted mistress.

Louis (now nearly fifteen) had so entirely the air and bearing of a gentleman's son, that Mrs. St. Eloy was treating him as an equal, and was distressed at not being able to find a reward adequate to the service, when Mr. Gilbert, the old butler, to whom he was already advantageously known, and who was enchanted to find his own misdemeanour so comfortably repaired, stepped forward and introduced him to his lady as the excellent lad who had detected the poor Abbé's murderer.

On this hint, Mrs. St. Eloy, after reiterated thanks and the kindest notice both of himself and little Bijou, who was as usual his companion in the boat, took out her purse, and was about to force on him a munificent recompense, when she was stopped by Louis, who, with an earnestness not to be overcome, entreated her "not to spoil the pleasure of one of the happiest moments of his life by any pecuniary offer. If her generosity considered so slight a service as worthy a reward, there was a favour—" And Louis half repenting that he had said so much, blushed, hesitated, and stopped short.

The lady, however, insisted on his finishing his request; and then Louis confessed "that one of his chief desires was to be permitted to see a picture in her possession, a portrait of Charles the First by Vandyke; and that if he might be allowed that favour, he should consider himself as much her debtor as she was pleased, most erroneously, to profess herself his."

Charmed at once with the petition and the manner, (for the Vandyke portrait was the apple of her eye,) the lady of the Nunnery led the way directly to the west gallery, in one of the compartments of which hung the exquisite painting of which Louis had so often heard.

It is singular that in many portraits of those illustrious persons who have met with a remarkable and untimely death, the expression of the countenance often seems to foreshadow a lamentable end. Lawrence's portrait of Sir John Moore, and almost all of the many pictures of the Princess Charlotte, whose large mysterious eye, with its intensity of sadness, presented such a

contrast to her youthful bloom and brilliant fortunes, may serve to illustrate the observation ; but its most striking confirmation is undoubtedly to be found in those splendid portraits of Charles by Vandyke, which seem at once to embody the character and the destiny of that mistaken and unhappy monarch. Those portraits, with their chivalrous costume and their matchless grace of air and attitude, are in themselves a history. Amidst the profound melancholy of that remarkable countenance, we recognise at once the despotic, obstinate, suspicious king ; the accomplished and elegantly-minded gentleman ; the puller down of liberty, the setter-up of art ; he who with so much taste for the highest literature, that he was known, as recorded by Milton, to make William Shakspeare "the closet companion of his solitudes," yet put his crown and his life in jeopardy to suppress that freedom of thought which is the vital breath of poetry ; the monarch who was in his own day so faithfully supported, so honestly opposed ; and whom in aftertime his most admiring partisans cannot but blame, and his fiercest opponents must needs pity. The posthumous influence of beauty is not more strongly evinced by the interest which clings round the memory of Mary of Scotland, than the power of painting, by the charm which is flung about every recollection of Charles. If kings were wise, they would not fail to patronise the art which can so amply repay their protection.

Louis felt the picture as such a picture ought to be felt. He stood before it mute and motionless, quite forgetting to praise, with every faculty absorbed in admiration ; and Mrs. St. Eloy had sufficient taste to appreciate the impression which this noble work of art had made on one who longed to become an artist. Even in common spectators the manner of seeing a picture is no mean test of character. Your superficial coxcomb (such, for example, as our friend King Harwood) shall skip up to a great painting, and talk that species of nonsense called criticism, praising and blaming to display his connoisseurship, flinging about flippant censure, and eulogy more impertinent still, as if he regarded the *chef-d'œuvre* before him as a mere theme for the display of his own small knowledge and less wit. The man of genius, on the other hand, is happily free from the pretensions of a haunting self-conceit. His admiration, undisturbed by the desire of saying pretty things,

is honest and genuine. I have seen a great orator awestruck by the grandeur of Salvator, entranced by the grace of Guercino, and his whole mind so filled and saturated by the beauty of a singularly fine collection, that the conversation of persons worthy of their pictures—that conversation of which he is usually the life and the ornament—seemed to put him out. The effort to talk disturbed the impression.

Just in this way felt Louis; and when Mrs. St. Eloy proceeded to show him some of the curiosities which her family, hoarders from generation to generation had accumulated, and which were all gathered together in this spacious gallery—Japan cabinets full of valuable coins; Indian pagods; China monsters of the choicest ugliness; armour of the date of the Civil Wars, French and English; reliques protestant and loyalist, including a breast-plate of the Admiral de Coligni, a satin slipper once belonging to the unfortunate Madame Elizabeth, a spur of Prince Rupert's, and what she valued beyond all other articles, the horn-book out of which the unhappy Charles learnt his alphabet—a pretty toy made of ivory, with gold letters;—when she produced these treasures for his gratification, and partly perhaps for her own, (for where is the pleasure of possessing a rarity unless other eyes see it?—we geranium-growers know that!)—Louis frankly confessed that he could look only at the picture; and the good old lady, instead of being offended at the neglect of her bijoux, kindly pressed him to come and see her and the Vandyke as often as he could spare time; and, on finding that, fearful of intruding, a week elapsed without his repeating his visit, she sent his friend Gilbert to bring him one fine morning to the Nunnery, and invited him to dine at her own table.

From this hour Louis became her declared favourite; and other observers, besides the good butcher, foreboded a total change of destiny to the fortunate boy. Louis himself, though utterly free from legacy-hunting and all mercenary speculations, had yet a secret design in his frequent visits to the west gallery. He longed to copy the Vandyke portrait; but, too modest to ask so great a favour, he contented himself with contemplating it as frequently as possible, and endeavouring to transfer its pearly colour and matchless expression to a study of the head which he was attempting from recollection at home.

In the mean time, his frequent visits were of almost equal

service to himself and to Mrs. St. Eloy. Tranquilly and innocently as her days had glided by, she was conscious of a new and most pleasurable development of affections too long dormant, as she gazed with an almost motherly interest on the graceful and spirited boy, who, whilst overthrowing in his own person one of her most cherished prejudices in favour of high blood, by showing that the son of a pastry-cook might be one of nature's gentlemen, fell most naturally into her peculiarities and ways of thinking on other points; had learned from the Abbé to be as violent an anti-jacobin as she was herself, as thoroughly devoted to the cause of monarchy and the Bourbons; and demanded no other evidence than that of the Vandyke portrait to be as stanch an adherent to King Charles, as loyal a cavalier and as honest a hater of the Roundheads, as ever led a charge at the side of Prince Rupert. Louis was half French too; and so, after the lapse of two centuries, was his kind patroness: she clung to the country of her ancestors, the land where they had won their knightly arms and had ranked amongst nobles and princes; though, under the influence of different circumstances, she and her immediate progenitors had long embraced a political creed widely different from that of the Huguenot refugee, flying from the persecution of a despotic monarch, who had been the first inhabitant of the Nunnery. She loved the very name of Frenchman — always provided he were neither Republican nor Bonapartist, and in her secret soul attributed much of the elegance and talent of her young favourite to the southern blood that flowed in his veins.

Louis, on his part, looked with a mingled sentiment of love and veneration on the kind and gentle recluse, who cast aside for his sake her hereditary stateliness and her long habits of solitude, and treated him rather with the indulgent affection of a kinswoman than the condescension of a superior. Full of quickness and observation, he saw the little old-maidish ways that mingled with her genuine benevolence of temper and her singular simplicity of character; but, grateful and warm hearted, he liked her all the better for her harmless peculiarities, took a sincere interest in the hatching of her canary birds, and assisted in the education of Bobby by adding the old French air of "Charmante Gabrielle" to his musical acquirements. Mrs. Dorothy Adams, with whom, as well as

with the old butler, the lively lad was a great favourite, (and be it said, *par parenthèse*, that he who was favoured by one of these worthy personages would not fail to rank high in the good graces of the other, they having been betrothed lovers for thirty years and odd, but still postponing their nuptials out of deference to the well-known opinions of their lady)—Mrs. Dorothy declared that his whistling was as good as the bird organ; Mrs. St. Eloy was enchanted; and Bobby himself, sharing, as it appeared, the fancy of his mistress, would fly to Louis, and perch upon his finger, and begin piping the moment he entered the west gallery.

Besides this apartment, which on account of the beloved picture continued to be that which he most frequented, there was another room in the house of great attraction—a large, low, well-filled library, containing a really fine collection of old books, French and English, from Urry's Chaucer and a black-letter Froissart downwards,—a collection rich especially in Memoirs of the Fronde and the Ligue in the one language, and in choice tracts of the times of the Commonwealth in the other,—full, in short, of that most fascinating sort of reading which may be called the materials of history.

Here Louis would sit for hours, poring over the narrative of Sir Thomas Herbert, or the then unpublished memoirs of Lady Fanshaw, or the ponderous but captivating volumes of Clarendon; or those volumes, more ponderous and more captivating still, the matchlessly interesting State Trials, of which the eleven folio volumes are all too little. And then he would lose all sense of time in the fascination of the old French Mémoires, from Philip de Commines to the Cardinal de Retz, and wonder whether there were any portrait of Henri Quatre half so fine as Vandyke's Charles the First.

There was another compartment of the library which Louis liked to glance over and laugh at,—a miscellaneous corner where all manner of quaint odd books were gathered together—books that mingled as strangely as the breastplate of Coligni and the horn-book of King Charles. There lay the Duchess of Newcastle's Plays with the Religious Courtship; Maundrell's Travels from Aleppo to Jerusalem, with Tulwell's Flower of Fame; Quarles's Divine Emblems, with Culpeper's Herbal; and the Divine Fancies digested into Epigrams, side by side with the Complete Housewife, or Accomplished Gen-

tlewoman's Companion* ; which last choice volume was rendered still more valuable by certain MS. recipes, written in a small cramped hand, and with a bold originality of orthography, which were curiously pasted on the blank leaves.

In a word, Louis loved the Nunnery. His little skiff (for he generally came by water) was so constantly directed thitherward, that, as Mrs. Duval observed, (who, charmed with the notice taken of him, was yet half jealous of his frequent absence,) "there was no doubt but the boat knew the way, and would have floated down the stream and stopped at the terrace-garden of its own accord." Even on the rarely occurring days that he did not spend with Mrs. St. Eloy, he used to row by the place, especially if he had been painting on the "Charles:" the very sight of the west gallery windows seemed to bring the picture more vividly before him. And now his study was so nearly finished, that, relying on Mrs. St. Eloy's indulgence, he had half resolved to bring the copy and see whether there was any faint and remote resemblance to the original. His mother said that no original could be finer ;—but what would the Vandyke say ?

One evening, towards the end of August, he was rowing past the Nunnery garden at an unusually late hour, having been tempted by the weather and the scenery into a somewhat distant excursion, when, pausing involuntarily and looking towards the house, — long ago, as he well knew, shut up for the night, — he was struck by the singular appearance in the lower windows of the west wing, the windows of the laundry. The shutters were closed ; but through every crevice appeared a light so brilliant and intense that you might have thought it was some illuminated ball-room. Startled, but still uncertain of the cause, Louis approached the garden and leapt ashore ; and in that instant the flames burst forth from the farthest window of the wing, — burst forth with the rushing noise that none who has ever heard it can forget, and with a radiance so bright, so broad, so glaring, that in a moment the cool night air, the dark blue firmament, and the quiet river were lighted up by the fearful element, and every leaf and flower in the garden became distinctly visible as beneath the noonday sun.

To call "Fire !" to rouse the sleeping inmates, to get

* Vide note at the end of the article.

Mrs. St. Eloy and her household into the garden, and to collect the neighbourhood, seemed to be the work of a moment to the alert and active boy. The villagers were rapidly called together by the alarm bell, by the shrieks of frightened women, and, more than all, by the sheets of flame which glared on the water and coloured the sky ; and the clergyman of the parish, a man of sense, courage, and presence of mind, employed the people in cutting a division between the wing and the body of the house, which—as the fire was luckily at the extreme end, that which was farthest from the main building—as there was a fire-engine on the premises and the village engine came lumbering in—as water was near and help abundant—there was every chance of effecting. That the whole wing must be destroyed was inevitable ; for although as yet the fire was confined to the laundry, where it had burst out, yet the long tongues of flame were already creeping up the outside of the gallery, and the wood-work of the windows might be heard crackling in the occasional lull that intervened amid the frightful sounds of the most frightful of earthly scenes,—the senseless screams of women, the fierce oaths of men, the howling of startled dogs, the deep tolling of the bell, the strange heavy rumbling noise of the advancing engines, the hissing and bubbling of the water, the rush and roar of the fire !—By none who has once heard those sounds can they ever be forgotten !

Poor Mrs. St. Eloy, wrapped in a large cloak, sat pale and silent under the scorching trees of her beautiful garden, surrounded by her helpless maidens, lamenting, crying, scolding, bewailing in every mode of female terror ; whilst her old men-servants were assisting the firemen and the stout peasantry in removing the furniture and working the engines. Mrs. Dorothy stood by her mistress, trying to comfort her ; but, bewildered by the horror of the scene, and by fears for her lover, who was foremost amongst the assistants, those endeavours were of a sort which, if Mrs. St. Eloy had happened to listen to them, would have had exactly a contrary effect : “ Poor Bobby ! ” sobbed the weeping *dame d’atours* : “ and Louis, poor dear boy ! what can have become of him ? ”

“ Louis ! ” echoed Mrs. St. Eloy ; “ gracious Heaven, where is he ? Who saw him last ? Gilbert, Mr. Congreve ! ” exclaimed she, darting towards the fire, “ have either of you seen Louis Duval ? ”

At that instant, Louis himself appeared breathless and panting at the great window of the gallery.

"A ladder!" was instantly the cry.

"No, no!" replied Louis; "feather-beds! mattresses! Quick! quick!" added he, as the flames were seen rising beside him: and the old butler placed the mattresses with the rapidity of thought, and with equal rapidity Louis flung out the Vandyke.

"Now a ladder!" cried the intrepid boy. "The floor is giving way!"

And clinging to the stone-work of the window, with hair and hands and garments scorched and blackened by the fire, but no material injury, he jumped upon the ladder, and on reaching the ground, found himself clasped in Mrs. St. Eloy's arms.

"Thank Heaven!" cried she, wiping away a gush of tears; — "thanks to all-gracious Heaven, you are safe, Louis! I care for nothing now. All other losses are light and trivial — you are saved!"

"Ay, dearest madam," replied Louis, "I, and a better thing — the Charles! the Vandyke! — only see here! — safe and unhurt!"

"You are safe, Louis!" rejoined his friend. "There is no life lost," added she more calmly.

"Poor Bobby!" sighed forth Mrs. Dorothy. And Louis smiled and drew the little creature safe and unhurt from his bosom, stroking its glossy head and whistling the old French tune of "Charmante Gabrielle;" and the bird took up the air and piped by the light of the fire as if it had been noon-day.

"We are all safe, Mrs. Dorothy, Bobby and I, and the Vandyke; and here comes dear, good, Mr. Gilbert, safe and sound too, to say that now the gallery has fallen in, the fire will soon be got under. We'll have a search to-morrow for King Charles's horn-book, and the admiral's cuirass, and Prince Rupert's spur; there's some chance still that we may find them unmelted. But the portrait and Bobby were the chief things to save, — were they not, dearest madam? Worth all the rest, — are they not?"

"No, Louis, it is you that are worth all and everything," rejoined Mrs. St. Eloy, taking his arm to return into the house. "Your life, which you have risked for an old woman's

whims, is more precious than all that I possess in the world," reiterated the grateful old lady ; "and you ought not to have perilled that life, even for Bobby and the Vandyke !" pursued she, slowly ascending the steps,— "not even for the King Charles ! Remember, Gilbert, that you go for my solicitor the first thing to-morrow morning. I must alter my will before I sleep."

"Ho ! ho !" chuckled our honest friend Stephen Lane, who had come up from Belford with the last reinforcements, and was selecting trusty persons to keep watch over the property. "Ho ! ho !" chuckled Stephen, with a knowing nod and an arch wink, and a smile of huge delight ; "altering her will, is she ? That'll be as good as a pot of gold anyhow. I wonder now," thought Stephen to himself, "whether the foolish woman his mother, will claim this as a making out of her dream ? I dare say she will ; for when a woman once takes a thing into her head, she'll turn it and twist it a thousand ways but she'll make it answer her purpose. Dang it !" chuckled the worthy butcher, rubbing his hands with inexpressible glee, "I'm as glad as if I had found a pot of gold myself ; he's such a famous lad ! And if his mother chooses to lay the good luck to her dream," exclaimed Stephen magnanimously, "why let her."

Note.—I cannot resist the temptation of quoting a few passages from one or two of these quaint old works, beginning, as bound in loyalty, with the dedication to "Quarles's Divine Fancies, digested into Epigrams, Meditations, and Observations. London: printed for William Meares, 1632. Dedicated to the Royall Bud of Majestie, and center of all our hopes and happiness, Prince Charles ; son and Heir Apparent to the High and Mightie Charles, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland." In which "Epistle Dedicatorie," he says : "Modell of sweetnesse, let thy busie fingers entertaine this slender presente ; let thy harmless smiles crowne it ; when thy infancie hath crackt the shell, let thy childhood tast the kernel : meantime, while thy little hands and eyes peruse it, lugg it in thy tender arms, and lay the burthen at thy royal parent's feet. Heaven bless thy youth with grace,

and crown thy days with glory ; angels conduct thee from the cradle to the crown ; let the English rose and the French lillie flourish in thy cheeks ; let the most eminent qualities of thy renowned grandfathers meet in thy princely heart —” And so forth, longer than I care to tell.

Now for a choice recipe from “The Compleat Housewife, or Accomplished Gentlewoman’s Companion, with curiously engraved copper-plates. To which is added a collection of above two hundred family receipts of medicines : viz. Drinks, sirops, salves, and ointments, never before made publick. By E. S. Printed for J. Pemberton, Golden Buck, over against St. Dunstan’s Church, Fleet Street, 1730.” — “The Lady Hewit’s cordial water : — Take red sage, betony, spear-mint, hyssop, setwell, thyme, balm, pennyroyal, celandine, water-cresses, heart’s-ease, lavender, angelica, germander, colemint, tamarisks, coltsfoot, valerian, saxefrage, pimpernel, vervain, parsley, rosemary, savory, scabious, agrimony, mother-thyme, wild marjorum, Roman wormwood, carduus benedictus, pellitory of the wall, field-daisies (flowers and leaves). Of each of these herbs take a handful, after they are picked and washed. Of rose-yarrow, comfrey, plaintain, camomile, sweet marjorum, maiden-hair ; of each of these a handful before they are washed or picked. Red rose-leaves and cow-slip-flowers, of each half a peck ; rosemary flowers a quarter of a peck ; hartshorn, two ounces ; juniper berries, one *dram* ; chive roots, one ounce ; comfrey roots sliced ; anniseed, fennel-seeds, carraway-seeds, nutmegs, ginger, cinnamom, pepper, spikenards, parsley seeds, cloves and mace ; aromaticum rosarum, three drams ; sassefras sliced, half an ounce ; alecampane roots, melilot flowers, calamus aromaticus, cardamums, lignum vitæ, aloes, rhubarb sliced thin. Galengal, veronica, lodericum ; of these each two drams ; acer bezoar, thirty grains ; musk, twenty-four grains ; ambergris, twenty grains ; flour of coral, two drams ; flour of amber, two drams ; flour of pearl, two drams ; *half a book of leaf gold* ; saffron in a little bag, two drams ; white sugar-candy, one pound. Wash the herbs, and swing them in a cloth till dry ; in the midst of the herbs put the seeds, spices, and drugs ; which being bruised, then put to the whole to steep in as much rich sherry sack of the best, as will cover them. Distil them in an alembic, and pour the water into quart bottles. There never

was a better cordial in cases of illness: two or three spoonfuls will almost revive from death."

Long live my Lady Hewit! Four of the giants of old could scarcely do more than shake that enormous bundle of herbs in the mainsail of a modern man-of-war! One may imagine the bustle and importance of concocting this cordial; the number of maidens picking the herbs; the housekeeper, or perchance the family apothecary, selecting and compounding the drugs; the perfume and aroma of this splendid and right royal ceremony. Dr. Steven's water, my Lady Allen's water, and aqua mirabilis, all deserve to be recorded; but I think my Lady Hewit's recipe the most various and imaginative.

After Lady Hewit, one small dose of Nicholas Culpeper, and I have done. It is extracted from "The English Physitian, with three hundred sixty and nine medicines made of English herbs that were not in any impression until this; being an Astrologico-physical Discourse of the vulgar Herbs of this nation; containing the complete method of preserving health, or cure himself being ill, for three-pence charge, with such things only as grow in England, they being most fit for English bodies. By Nicholas Culpeper, Gent., Student in Physick and Astrology. London: printed for Peter Cole, at the sign of the Printing Press in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange. 1654."

N.B. This elaborate treatise was a posthumous work,—one, as appears from a most curious prefatory epistle by Mrs. Alice Culpeper, the relict of Nicholas,—“one out of seventy-nine books of his own making and translating, left on her hands and deposited into the hand of his and her much honoured friend Mr. Peter Cole, bookseller, at the Printing Press, near the Royal Exchange, from whom they may be expected in print at due season. Also, her husband left seventeen other books completely perfected in the hand of the said Mr. Cole, for which he paid her husband in his life-time.” [Jewel of a bookseller! Alas, that the race should be extinct!] “And Mr. Cole is ready and willing (on any good occasion) to shew any of the said seventy-nine books, or the seventeen, to such as doubt thereof.”—Inestimable Peter Cole! if he could but have communicated his faith in Nicholas Culpeper to his customers, he would have made a better bargain. I wonder how many of the said seventy-nine books or of the seven-

teen ever were printed? and, if printed, how many were sold? and what the size and weight of the MSS. might be altogether? — whether one waggon would hold the huge ponderosities? or whether they would require two?

I must now, however, give a brief specimen of Nicholas's astrologico-physical treatise, — a short sample it must be, for a collection of the "Beauties of Culpeper" would be as tedious in this duodecimo age as one of his own heaviest volumas. Thus adviseth Nicholas:

"Keep your head outwardly warm. Accustom yourself to smell hot herbs. Take a pill that heats the head at night going to bed. In the morning, a decoction that cools the liver. — You must not think, courteous people, that I can spend my time in giving you examples of all diseases. These are enough to let you see as much light as you can receive without hurt. If I should set you to look upon the sun of my knowledge, you would be dazzled.

"To such as study astrology (who are the only men I know fit to study physick), (physick without astrology being like a lamp without oyl), you are the men I exceedingly respect; and such documents as my brain can give you (being at present absent from my study), I shall give you, and an example to show the proof.

"Fortifie the body with herbs of the nature of the Lord of the Ascendant; 'tis no matter whether he be fortune or infortune in this case. Let your medicine be something antipathetical to the Lord of the Sixth. Let your medicine be something of the nature of the sign ascending. If the Lord of the Tenth be strong, make use of *his* medicine. If this cannot well be, make use of the medicines of the light of time. Be sure alwaies to fortifie the grieved part of the body by sympathetic remedies. Regard the heart. Keep it upon the wheels, because the sun is the fountain of life, and *therefore* those universal remedies aurum potabile and the philosopher's stone cure all diseases by fortifying the heart."

He says of the vine: "It is a most gallant tree, very sympathetic with the body of man." Of the willow: "The moon owns it, and, being a fine cool tree, the branches of it are very convenient to be placed in the chamber of one sick of a fever." Of "woodbind, or honeysuckles: the celestial Crab claims it. It is fitting a conserve made of the

flowers of it were in every gentlewoman's house ! for if the lungs be afflicted by Jupiter, this is your cure."

Also, he saith : " If I were to tell a long story of medicines working by sympathy or antipathy, ye would not understand one word of it. They that are fit to make phisicians will find it in my treatise." [Query — One of the seventy-nine ? or of the seventeen ? — the paid, or unpaid wisdom ?] " All modern phisicians know not what belongs to a sympathetical cure, no more than a cuckoo knows what belongs to sharps and flats in musick ; but follow the vulgar road and call it a hidden quality, because it is hid from the eyes of dunces :— and indeed none but astrologers can give reason for it, — and phisick without reason is like a pudding without fat," quoth Nicholas Culpeper.

Finally, he says, — " He that reads this and understands what he reads, hath a jewel more worth than a diamond. This shall live when I am dead ; and thus I leave it to the world, not caring a half-penny whether they like it or dislike it. The grave equals all men ; therefore shall equal me with princes, until which time an eternal Providence is over me ; then the ill tongue of a prattling priest, or one who hath more tongue than wit, more pride than honesty, shall never trouble me."

THE SURGEON'S COURTSHIP.

It seems rather paradoxical to say that a place noted for good air should be favourable to the increase and prosperity of the medical tribe ; nevertheless the fact is so, certainly in this particular instance, and I suspect in many others ; and when the causes are looked into, the circumstance will seem less astonishing than it appears at the first glance, — a good air being, as we all know, the *pis aller* of the physician, the place to which, when the resources of his art are exhausted, he sends his patients to recover or to die, as it may happen. Sometimes they really do recover, especially if in leaving their medical attendant they also leave off medicine ; but for the most part,

poor things ! they die just as certainly as they would have done if they had stayed at home, only that the sands run a little more rapidly in consequence of the glass being shaken : and this latter catastrophe is particularly frequent in Belford, whose much-vaunted air being, notwithstanding its vicinity to a great river, keen, dry, and bracing, is excellently adapted for preserving health in the healthy, but very unfit for the delicate lungs of an invalid.

The place, however, has a name for salubrity ; and, as sick people continue to resort to it in hopes of getting well, there is of course, no lack of doctors to see them through the disease with proper decorum, cure them if they can, or let them die if so it must be. There is no lack of doctors, and still less is there a lack of skill ; for, although the air of Belford may be overrated, there is no mistake in the report which assigns to the medical men of the town singular kindness, attention, and ability.

Thirty years ago these high professional qualities were apt to be alloyed by the mixture of a little professional peculiarity in dress and pedantry in manner. The faculty had not in those days completely dropped “the gold-headed cane ;” and in provincial towns especially, the physician was almost as distinguishable by the cut of his clothes as the clergyman by his shovel-crowned hat, or the officer by his uniform.

The two principal physicians of Belford at this period were notable exemplifications of medical costume — each might have sat for the picture of an M.D. The senior, and perhaps the more celebrated of the two, was a short, neat old gentleman, of exceedingly small proportions, somewhat withered and shrivelled, but almost as fair, and delicate, and carefully preserved, as if he had himself been of that sex of which he was the especial favourite — an old lady in his own person. His dress was constantly a tight stock, shoes with buckles, brown silk stockings, and a full suit of drab ; the kid gloves, with which his wrinkled white hands were at once adorned and preserved, were of the same sober hue ; and the shining bob-wig, which covered no common degree of intellect and knowledge, approached as nearly to the colour of the rest of his apparel as the difference of material would admit. His liveries might have been cut from the same piece with his own coat, and the chariot, in which he might be computed to pass

one third of his time, (for he would as soon have dreamt of flying as of walking to visit his next-door neighbour,) was of a similar complexion. Such was the outer man of the shrewd and sensible Dr. Littleton. Add, that he loved a rubber, and that his manner was a little prim, a little quaint, and a little fidgetty, and the portrait of the good old man will be complete.

His competitor, Dr. Granville, would have made four of Dr. Littleton, if cut into quarters. He was a tall, large, raw-boned man, who looked like a North Briton, and I believe actually came from that country, so famous for great physicians. His costume was invariably black, surmounted by a powdered head and a pigtail, which some of his fair patients (for the doctor was a single man, and considered as a *très-bon parti* by the belles of the town) flatteringly asserted was adopted for the purpose of making him look older—a purpose which most assuredly it did not fail to effect.

However this may be, Dr. Littleton's chestnut-coloured bob and Dr. Granville's powdered pigtail set the fashion amongst the inferior practitioners. From the dear old family apothecary—the kind and good old man, beloved even by the children whom he physicked, and regarded by the parents as one of their most valued friends—to the pert parish doctor, whom Crabbe has described so well, “all pride and business, bustle, and conceit;” from the top to the bottom of the profession, every medical man in Belford wore a bob-wig or a pigtail. It was as necessary a preliminary to feeling a pulse, or writing a prescription, as a diploma; and to have cured a patient without the regular official decoration would have been a breach of decorum that nothing could excuse. Nay, so long did the prejudice last, that when some dozen years afterwards three several adventurers tried their fortune in the medical line at Belford, their respective failures were universally attributed to the absence of the proper costume; though the first was a prating fop, who relied entirely on calomel and the depleting system—an English Sangrado!—the second, a solemn coxcomb, who built altogether on stimulants—gave brandy in apoplexies, and sent his patients, persons who had always lived soberly, tipsy out of the world; and the third, a scientific Jack-of-all-trades, who passed his days in catching butterflies and stuffing birds for his museum, examining strata,

and analysing springs—detecting Cheltenham in one, *Barèges* in another, fancying some new-fangled chalybeate in the rusty scum of a third, and writing books on them all—whilst his business, such as it was, was left to take care of itself. To my fancy, the inside of these heads might very well account for the non-success of their proprietors; nevertheless, the good inhabitants of Belford obstinately referred their failure to the want of bob-wigs, pig-tails, and hair-powder.

Now, however, times are altered—altered even in Belford itself. Dr. Littleton and Dr. Granville repose with their patients in the churchyard of St. Nicholas, and their costumes are gone to the tomb of the Capulets.

Of a truth, all professional distinctions in dress are rapidly wearing away. Uniforms, it is true, still exist; but, except upon absolute duty, are seldom exhibited: and who, except my venerable friend the Rector of Hadley, ever thinks of wearing a shovel-hat?

Amongst medical practitioners especially, all peculiarities, whether of equipage or apparel, are completely gone by. The chariot is no more necessary, except as a matter of convenience, than the gold-headed cane or the bob-wig; and our excellent friend Dr. Chard may, as it suits him, walk in the town, or ride on horse-back, or drive his light open carriage in the country, without in the slightest degree impugning his high reputation, or risking his extensive practice; whilst the most skilful surgeon in Belford may be, and actually is, with equal impunity the greatest beau in the place.

There are not many handsomer or more agreeable men than Mr. Edward Foster, who—the grandson by his mother's side of good old Dr. Littleton, and by his father's of the venerable apothecary, so long his friend and contemporary, and combining considerable natural talent with a first-rate scientific education—stepped, as by hereditary right, into the first connection in Belford and its populous and opulent neighbourhood, and became almost immediately the leading surgeon of the town.

Skilful, accomplished, clever, kind,—possessing, besides his professional emoluments, an easy private fortune, and living with a very agreeable single sister in one of the best houses of the place,—Edward Foster, to say nothing of his good looks, seemed to combine within himself all the elements

of popularity. His good looks, too, were of the best sort, resulting from a fine, manly, graceful figure, and an open, intelligent countenance, radiant with good-humour and vivacity. And very popular Edward Foster was. He had but one fault, so far as I could hear, and that was an inaptitude to fall in love. In vain did grave mammas sagely hint that a professional man could not expect to succeed unless married; in vain did jocular papas laughingly ask, how he would manage when Mr. Lyons, the young lawyer, had stolen his sister for a wife? Edward Foster did not marry, and did succeed; and Miss Foster became Mrs. Lyons, and the house went on as well as ever. Even the young ladies condescended as much as young ladies ought to condescend, but still Edward Foster was obdurate; and the gossips of Belford began to suspect that the heart which appeared so invulnerable must have been protected by some distant and probably too ambitious attachment from the charms of their fair townswomen, and even proceeded to make inquiries as to the daughters of the various noble families that he attended in the neighbourhood.

Time solved the enigma; and the solution, as often happens in these cases, lay in a spot wholly unsuspected by the parties interested.

Few things are more melancholy and yet few more beautifully picturesque than the grounds of some fine old place deserted by its owners, and either wholly pulled down, or converted to the coarse and common purposes of a farmsteading. We have many such places in our neighbourhood, where the estates (as is usually the case in all the counties within fifty miles of London) have either entirely passed away from their old proprietors, or have been so much dismembered by the repeated purchases of less ancient but more opulent settlers on the land, that the residence has gradually become too expensive for the diminished rent-roll; and abandoned, probably not without considerable heart-yearning, by the owner, has been insensibly suffered to moulder away, an antedated and untimely ruin, or been degraded to the vulgar uses of a farmhouse.

One of the most beautiful of these relics of old English magnificence is the Court-house at Allonby, which has been desecrated in all manner of ways; first wholly deserted, then in great measure dismantled then partly taken down, and

what remained of the main building — what *would* remain, for the admirable old masonry offered every sort of passive resistance to the sacrilegious tools and engines of the workmen employed in the wicked task of demolition, and was as difficult to be pulled down as a rock ; the remains, mutilated and disfigured as they were, still further disfigured by being fitted up as a dwelling for the farmer who rented the park ; whilst the fine old stables, coach-houses, and riding-houses were appropriated to the basest uses of a farmyard. I wonder that the pigs and cows, when they looked at the magnificence about them, the lordly crest (a deer couchant) placed over the noble arched gateways, and on the solid pillars at the corners of the walls, and the date (1573), which, with the name of the first proprietor, “ Andrew Montfalcon,” surmounted all the Gothic doors, were not ashamed of their own unfitness for so superb a habitation.

Allonby Court was one of the finest specimens of an old manorial residence that had ever come under my observation. Built at the period when castellated mansions were no longer required for defence, it yet combined much of their solidity and massiveness, with far more of richness, of ornament, and even of extent, than was compatible with the main purpose of those domestic fortresses, in which beauty and convenience were alike sacrificed to a jealous enclosure of walls and ramparts.

Allonby had been erected by one of the magnificent courtiers of a magnificent era, the despotic but splendid dynasty of the Tudors ; and its picturesque portal, its deep bay windows, its clustered chimneys, its hall where a coach and six might have paraded, and its oaken staircase, up which a similar equipage might with all convenience have driven, were even surpassed in grandeur and beauty by the interior fittings up ; the splendour of the immense chimneypieces, the designs of the balustrades round the galleries, the carving of the cornices, the gilding of the panelled wainscoting, and the curious inlaying of its oaken floors. Twenty years ago it stood just as it must have been when Sir Andrew Montfalcon took possession of it. Tapestry, pictures, furniture, all were the same ; all had grown old together : and this entire and perfect keeping, this absolute absence of everything modern or new, gave a singular harmony to the scene. It was a venerable and most

perfect model of its own distant day ; and when an interested steward prevailed on a nonresident and indolent proprietor to consent to its demolition, there was a universal regret in the neighbourhood. Everybody felt glad to hear that, so solidly had it been built, the sale of the materials did not defray the expense of pulling them down. So malicious did our love of the old place make us.

We felt the loss of that noble structure as a personal deprivation, and it was such ; for the scenery of a country, the real and living landscape, is to all who have eyes to see and taste to relish its beauties an actual and most valuable property. To enjoy is to possess.

Still, however, the remains of Allonby are strikingly picturesque. The single wing which is standing rises like a tower from the fragments of the half-demolished hall ; and the brambles, briars, and ivies, which grow spontaneously amongst the ruins, mingle with the luxuriant branches of a vine which has been planted on the south side of the building, and wreaths its rich festoons above the gable-ends and round the clustered chimneys, veiling and adorning, as Nature in her bounty often does, the desolation caused by the hand of man. Gigantic forest-trees, oak, and elm, and beech, are scattered about the park, which still remains unenclosed and in pasture ; a clear, bright river glides through it, from which on one side rises an abrupt grassy bank, surmounted by a majestic avenue of enormous firs and lime-trees, planted in two distinct rows ; a chain of large fish-ponds, some of them dried up and filled with underwood, communicates with the stream ; and flowering shrubs, the growth of centuries, laburnum, lilac, laurel, double cherry, and double peach, are clustering in gay profusion around the mouldering grottos and ruined temples with which the grounds had been adorned.

The most beautiful and most perfect of these edifices was a high, tower-like fishing-room, overhanging the river, of which indeed the lower part formed a boat-house, covered with honeysuckle, jessamine, and other creeping plants, backed by tall columnar poplars, and looking on one side into a perfect grove of cypress and cedar. A flaunting musk-rose grew on one side of the steps, and a Portugal laurel on the other ; whilst a moss-grown sundial at a little distance rose amidst a thicket of roses, lilies, and hollyhocks, (relics of an old flower-garden,)

the very emblem of the days that were gone, — a silent but most eloquent sermon on the instability of human affairs.

This romantic and somewhat melancholy dwelling was inhabited by a couple as remote from all tinge of romance, or of sadness, as ever were brought together in this world of vivid contrast. Light and shadow were not more opposite than were John and Martha Clewer to their gloomy habitation.

John Clewer and his good wife Martha were two persons whom I can with all truth and convenience describe conjointly in almost the same words, as not unfrequently happens with a married couple in their rank of life. They were a stout, comely, jolly, goodnatured pair, in the prime of life, who had married early, and had grown plump, ruddy, and hardy under the influence of ten years of changing seasons and unchanging industry. Poor they were, in spite of his following the triple calling of miller, farmer, and gamekeeper, and her doing her best to aid him by baking and selling in the form of bread the corn which he not only grew but ground, and defiling the faded grandeur of the court by the vulgarities of cheese, red-herrings, eggs, candles, and onions, and the thousand-and-one nuisances which compose the *omnibus* concern called a village shop. Martha's home-baked loaves were reckoned the best in the county, and John's farming was scarcely less celebrated: nevertheless, they were poor; a fact which might partly be accounted for by the circumstance of their ten years' marriage having produced eight children, and partly by their being both singularly liberal, disinterested, and generous. If a poor man brought the produce of his children's gleanings to John's mill, he was sure not only to get it ground for nothing, but to receive himself at the hands of the good miller as plentiful a meal of beef or bacon, and as brimming a cup of strong ale, as ever was doled out of the old buttery; whilst Martha, who was just John himself in petticoats, and in whom hospitality took the feminine form of charity, could never send away the poorest of her customers (in other words, her debtors), empty-handed, however sure she might be that the day of payment would never arrive until the day of judgment. Rich our good couple certainly were not, — unless the universal love and good-will of the whole neighbourhood may count for riches; but content most assuredly they were, — ay, and more than content! If I were asked to name the happiest and merriest

persons of my acquaintance, I think it would be John and Martha Clewer.

With all their resemblance, there was between this honest country couple one remarkable difference: the husband was a man of fair common sense, plain and simple-minded, whilst his wife had ingrafted on an equal artlessness and *naïveté* of manner a degree of acuteness of perception and shrewdness of remark, which rendered her one of the most amusing companions in the county, and, added to her excellences as a baker, had no small effect in alluring to her shop the few customers whose regular payments enabled her to bear up against the many who never paid at all. For my own part, — who am somewhat of a character-studier by profession, and so complete a bread-fancier that every day in the week shall have its separate loaf, from the snowy French roll of Monday to the unsifted home-made of Saturday at e'en, — I had a double motive for frequenting Martha's bakehouse, at which I had been for some years a most punctual visitor and purchaser until last spring and summer, when first a long absence, then a series of honoured guests, then the pressure of engrossing occupations, then the weather, then the roads, and at last the having broken through the habit of going thither, kept me for many months from my old and favourite haunt, the venerable Court.

So long had been my absence, that the hedgerows, in which the woodbine was at my last visit just putting forth its hardy bluish leaves, and the elder making its earliest shoots, were now taking their deepest and dingiest hue, enlivened only by garlands of the traveller's joy, the briony, and the wild-vetch; that the lowly primrose and the creeping violet were succeeded by the tall mallows and St. John's-worts, and the half-seeded stalks of the foxglove; and that the beans, which the women and girls were then planting, men and boys were now about to cut: in a word, the budding spring was succeeded by the ripe and plenteous autumn, when, on a lovely harvest afternoon, I at length revisited Allonby.

The day, although exquisitely pleasant, had been rather soft than bright, and was now closing in with that magical effect of the evening light which lends a grace to the commonest objects, and heightens in an almost incredible degree the beauty of those which are already beautiful. Flowers are never so

glorious as in the illusive half-hour which succeeds the setting of the sun ; and it is at that period, that a really fine piece of natural scenery is seen to most advantage. I paused for a moment before entering Martha's territory, the shop, to look at the romantic grounds of Allonby, all the more picturesque from their untrained wildness ; and on the turfy terrace beyond the fishing-house, and just at the entrance of that dark avenue of leafy lime-trees and firs, whose huge straight stems shone with a subdued and changeful splendour, now of a purplish hue, and now like dimmer brass, — just underneath the two foremost trees, strongly relieved by the deep shadow, stood a female figure, graceful and perfect as ever was fancied by poet or modelled by sculptor. Her white dress had all the effect of drapery, and her pure and colourless complexion, her flaxen ringlets almost as pale as the swan-like neck around which they fell, her fair hand shading her eyes, and the fixed attention of her attitude as she stood watching some of Martha's children at play upon the grass, gave her more the look of an alabaster statue than of a living breathing woman. I never saw grace so unconscious yet so perfect. I stood almost as still as herself to look on her, until she broke, or I should rather say changed the spell, by walking forward to the children, and added the charm of motion to that of symmetry. I then turned to Martha, who was watching my absorbed attention with evident amusement, and, without giving me time to ask any questions, answered my thoughts by an immediate exclamation : “ Ah, ma'am, I knew you'd like to look at Emma Newton ! Many a time I've said to my master, ‘ 'Tis a pity that madam has not seen our Emma ! she'd be so sure to take a fancy to her !’ And now she's going away, poor thing ! That's the way things fall out, after the time, as one may say. I knew she'd take your fancy.”

“ Her name is Emma Newton, then ? ” replied I, still riveting my eyes on the lovely, airy creature before me, who, shaking back the ringlets from her fair face with a motion of almost infantine playfulness, was skimming along the bank to meet the rosy, laughing children.” “ And who may Emma Newton be ? ”

“ Why, you see, ma'am, her mother was my husband's first cousin. She lived with old Lady Lynnere as housekeeper, and married the butler ; and this is the only child. Both father

and mother died, poor thing! before she was four years old, and Lady Lynnere brought her up quite like a lady herself; but now she is dead, and dead without a will, and her relations have seized all, and poor Emma is come back to her friends. But she won't stay with them, though," pursued Mrs. Clewer, half testily; "she's too proud to be wise; and instead of staying with me and teaching my little girls to sew samplers, she's going to be a tutoress in some foreign parts beyond sea — Russia I think they call the place — going to some people whom Lady Lynnere knew, who are to give her a salary, and so hinder her from being a burden to her relations, as she's goose enough to say — as if we could feel her little expenses; or, say we did — as if we would not rather go with half a meal than part with her, sweet creature as she is! and to go to that cold country and come back half frozen, or die there and never come back at all! Howsomever," continued Martha, "it's no use bemoaning ourselves now; the matter's settled — her clothes are all aboard ship, her passage taken, and I'm to drive her to Portsmouth in our little shay cart to-morrow morning. A sorrowful parting 'twill be for her and the poor children, merry as she is trying to seem at this minute. I dare say we shall never see her again, for she is but delicate, and there's no putting old heads upon young shoulders; so instead of buying good warm stuffs and flannels, cloth cloaks and such things, to fence her pretty dear self against the cold, she has laid out her little money in light summer gear, as if she was going to stay in England and be married this very harvest: and now she'll go abroad and catch her death, and we shall never set eyes on her again." And the tears, which during her whole speech had stood in Martha's eyes, fairly began to fall.

"Oh, Mrs. Clewer! you must not add to the natural pain of parting by such a fancy as that; your pretty cousin seems slight and delicate, but not unhealthy. What should make you suppose her so?"

"Why, ma'am, our young doctor, Mr. Edward Foster (you know how clever he is!), was attending my master this spring for the rheumatism, just after Emma came here. She had a sad cough, poor thing! when she first arrived, caught by sitting up o' nights with old Lady Lynnere; and Mr. Edward said she was a tender plant and required nursing herself. He came to see her every day for two months, and quite set

her up, and would not take a farthing for his pains: and I did think — and so did my master, after I told him — But, howsomever, that's all over now, and she's going away to-morrow morning."

"What did you think?" inquired I, amused to find Edward Foster's affections the subject of speculation in Mrs. Clewer's rank of life, — "what did you say that you thought of Mr. Foster, Martha?"

"Why to be sure, ma'am — people can't help their thoughts, you know, — and it did seem to me that he fancied her."

"You mean to say that you think Mr. Edward Foster liked your young relation — was in love with her?"

"To be sure I do, ma'am, — at least I did," continued Martha, correcting herself; "and so did my master, and so would anybody. He that has so much business used to come here every day, and stay two hours at a time, when, except for the pleasure of talking to her, there was no more need of his coming to Emma than of his coming to me. Every day of his life he used to come; his very horse knew the place, and used to stop at the gate as natural as our old mare."

"And when she got well, did he leave off coming?"

"No, no! he came still, but not so often. He seemed not to know his own mind, and kept on dilly-dally, shilly-shally, and the poor thing pined and fretted, as I could see that was watching her, though she never said a word to me of the matter, nor I to her; and then this offer to go to Russia came, and she accepted it, I do verily believe, partly to get as far from him as she could. Ah! well-a-day, it's a sad thing when young gentlemen don't know their own minds!" sighed the tender-hearted Mrs. Clewer; "they don't know the grief they're causing!"

"What did he say when he heard she was going abroad?" asked I. "That intelligence might have made him acquainted with the state of his own affections."

"Lackaday, ma'am!" exclaimed Martha, on whom a sudden ray of light seemed to have broken, "so it might! and I verily believe that to this hour he knows nothing of the matter! What a pity there's not a little more time! The ship sails on Saturday, and this is Thursday night! Let's look at the letter," pursued Martha, diving into her huge

pockets. "I'm sure it said the ship, Roebuck, sailed on Saturday morning. Where can the letter be!" exclaimed Martha, after an unsuccessful hunt amidst the pincushions, needle-books, thread-cases, scissors, handkerchiefs, gloves, mittens, purses, thimbles, primers, tops, apples, buns, and pieces of gingerbread, with which her pockets were loaded, and making an especial search amongst divers odd-looking notes and memorandums, which the said receptacles contained. "Where can the letter be? Fetch your father, Dolly! Saddle the grey mare, Jem! I am going to have the toothache, and must see Mr. Foster directly. Tell Emma I want to speak to her, Tom! — No; she shall know nothing about it — don't." And with these several directions to some of the elder children, who were by this time crowding about her, Martha bustled off, with her handkerchief held to her face, in total forgetfulness of myself, and of the loaf, which I had paid for but not received; and after vainly waiting for a few minutes, during which I got a nearer view of the elegant Emma, and thought within myself how handsome a couple she and Mr. Foster would have made, and perhaps might still make, with admiration of her gracefulness, pity for her sorrows, and interest in her fate, I mounted my pony phaeton and took my departure.

The next morning Martha, in her shay-cart (as she called her equipage), appeared at our door, like an honest woman, with my loaf and a thousand apologies. Her face was tied up, as is usual in cases of toothache, and, though she did not, on narrow observation, look as if much ailed her,—for her whole comely face was radiant with happiness,—I thought it only courteous to ask what was the matter.

"Lord love you, ma'am, nothing!" quoth Martha; "only after you went away I rummaged out the letter, and found that the Roebuck did sail on Saturday as I thought, and that if I meant to take your kind hint, no time was to be lost. So I had the toothache immediately, and sent my master to fetch the doctor. It was lucky his being a doctor, because one always can send for them at a minute's warning, as one may say. So I sent for Mr. Edward to cure my toothache, and told him the news."

"And did he draw your tooth, Martha?"

"Heaven help him! not he! he never said a word about

me or my aches, but was off like a shot to find Emma, who was rambling about somewhere in the moonlight to take a last look of the old grounds. And it's quite remarkable how little time these matters take ; for when I went out for a bit of a stroll half an hour afterwards, to see how the land lay, I came bolt upon them by accident, and found that he had popped the question, that she had accepted him, and that the whole affair was as completely settled as if it had been six months about. So Emma stays to be married ; and I am going in my shay-cart to fetch her trunks and boxes from Portsmouth. No need to fling them away, though we must lose the passage-money, I suppose ; for all her silks and muslins, and trinkum-trankums, which I found so much fault with, will be just right for the wedding ! To think how matters come round !” added Martha. “And what a handy thing the toothache is sometimes ! I don't think there's a happier person anywhere than I am at this minute, — except, perhaps, Emma and Mr. Edward ; and they are walking about making love under the fir-trees in the park.”

And off she drove, a complete illustration of Prospero's feeling, though expressed in such different words :

So glad of this, as they, I cannot be,
 ————— but my rejoicing
 At nothing can be more.

THE IRISH HAYMAKER.

THAT our county stands right in the way from Ireland to London, and of consequence from London back again to Ireland, is a fact well known, not only to our justices of the peace in quarter session assembled, but also to the Commons House of Parliament ; the aforesaid county, always a very needy personage, having been so nearly ruined by the cost of passing the Irish paupers home to their own country, that a bill is actually before the legislature to relieve the local rates from the expense of this novel species of transportation, and provide a separate fund for the transmittal of that wretched class of

homeless poor from the metropolis to Bristol, and from Bristol across the Channel.

But, besides these unfortunate absentees, whose propensity to rove abroad in imitation of their betters occasions so much trouble to overseers, and police-officers, and mayors of towns, and magistrates at quarter sessions, and, finally, to the two Houses of Lords and Commons, — besides this most miserable race of vagrants, there are two other sets of Irish wanderers with whom we are from our peculiar position sufficiently familiar — pigdrivers and haymakers.

Of the first, we in the country, who live amongst the by-ways of the world, see much ; whilst the inhabitants of Belford, folks who dwell amidst highways and turnpikes, know as little either of the pigs or their drivers, until they see the former served up at table in the shape of ham or bacon, as if they lived at Timbuctoo ; inasmuch as these Irish swine people, partly to avoid the hard road, partly to save the tolls, invariably choose a far more intricate track, leading through chains of downs and commons, and back lanes, some of turf and some of mud (which they plough up after a fashion that makes our parish Macadamizers half crazy), until they finally reach the metropolis by a route that would puzzle the map-makers, but which is nevertheless almost as direct and nearly as lawless as that pursued by a different class of bipeds and quadrupeds in that fashionable way of breaking bones called a steeple-chase.

Few things are more forlorn in appearance than these Irish droves, weary and footsore, and adding the stain of every soil they have passed through since their landing to their large original stock of native dirt and ugliness. English pigs are ugly and dirty enough, Heaven knows ! but then the creatures have a look of lazy, slovenly enjoyment about them ; they are generally fat and always idle, and for the most part (except when ringing or killing, or when turned by main force out of some garden or harvest-field) contrive to lead as easy lives, and to have as much their own way in the world, as any set of animals with whom one is acquainted : so that, unsightly as they are, there is no unpleasant feeling in looking at them, forming as they do the usual appendage to the busy farm or the tidy cottage. But these poor brutes from over the water are a misery to see ; gaunt and long, and shambling, almost

as different in make from our English pig as a greyhound from a pointer, dragging one weary limb after the other, with an expression of fretful suffering which, as one cannot relieve, one gets away from as soon as possible. Even their halts hardly seem to improve their condition: hungry though they be, they are too tired to eat.

So far as personal appearance goes, there is no small resemblance between the droves and the drovers. Just as long, as guant, and as shambling as the Irish pigs, are the Irish boys (*Anglicè*, men) who drive them; with the same slow lounging gait, and, between the sallow skin, the sunburnt hair, and the brown frieze great-coat, of nearly the same dirty complexion. There, however, the likeness ceases. The Irish drover is as remarkable for good-humour, good spirits, hardihood, and light-heartedness, as his countryman, the pig, is for the contrary properties of peevishness and melancholy, and exhaustion and fatigue. He goes along the road from stage to stage, from alehouse to alehouse, scattering jokes and compliments, to the despair of our duller clowns and the admiration of our laughing maidens. They even waste their repartees on one another, as the following anecdote will show: —

A friend of mine, passing a public-house about a mile off, well known as the Church-house of Aberleigh, saw two drovers leaning against the stile leading into the churchyard, whilst their weary charge was reposing in the highway. The sign of the Six Bells had of course suggested a practical commentary on the beer-bill. “Christy,” says one, with the frothy mug at his lips, “here’s luck to us!” — “Ay, Pat,” drily replied his companion, “pot luck!”

Our business, however, is with the haymakers, a far more diversified race, inasmuch as Irish people of all classes and ages, if they can but raise money for their passage, are occasionally tempted over to try their fortune in the English harvest.

The first of these adventurers known at Belford was a certain Corny Sullivan, who had twenty years ago the luck to be engaged as a haymaker at Denham Park, which, in spite of its spacious demesne, its lodges, and its avenue, is actually within the precincts of the Borough. Now the owner of Denham, being one of the kindest persons in the world, was especially good to the poor Irishman, — allowed him a barn

full of clean straw for his lodging, and potatoes and buttermilk at discretion for his board, — so that Corny was enabled to carry home nearly the whole of his earnings to “the wife and the childer;” and, having testified his gratitude to his generous benefactor by bringing the ensuing season a pocketful of seed potatoes, — such potatoes as never before were grown upon English ground, — has ever since been accounted a great public benefactor; the potatoes — “rale blacks,” Corny calls them (I suppose because they are red) — having been very generally diffused by their liberal possessor.

Along with the “rale blacks” Corney brought a brother haymaker, Tim Murphy by name, who shared his barn, his allowance of buttermilk, and his dole of potatoes, and more than partook of his popularity. Corny was an oldish-looking hollow-eyed man, with a heavy slinging gait, a sallowish, yellowish complexion, a red wig much the worse for wear, and a long frieze coat, once grey, fastened at the neck by a skewer, with the vacant sleeves hanging by his side as if he had lost both his arms. His English (though he was said “to have beautiful Irish”) was rather perplexing than amusing; and, upon the whole, he was so harmless and inoffensive, — so *quite*, as he himself would have phrased it — that Mary Marshall, the straw-hat-maker in Bristol-street, who, on the first rumour of an Irish haymaker, had taken a walk to Denham to see how Sally the housemaid liked a bonnet which she had turned for her, was heard to declare that, but for the wig and the big coat, the man was just like another man, and not worth crossing the road to look after.

Tim Murphy was another guess sort of persons. Tall, athletic, active, and strong, with a bright blue eye, a fair yet manly complexion, high features, a resolute open countenance, and a head of curling brown hair, it would have been difficult to select a finer specimen of a young and spirited Irishman; whilst his good-humour, his cheerfulness, the promptitude with which he put forth his strength, whether in work or play, (for at the harvest-home supper he danced down two Scotchwomen and outsang a Bavarian broom-girl,) and, added to these accomplishments, his decided turn for gallantry, and the abundance and felicity of his compliments rendered him a favourite with high and low.

The lasses, above all, were his devoted admirers; and so

skilfully had he contrived to divide his attentions, that when, declining to return to Ireland with his comrade at the end of the hay season, he lingered, first for the harvest, then for the after-math, and lastly for the potato-digging, not only the housemaid and the kitchenmaid at the Park, but Harriet Bridges the gardener's daughter, and Susan Stock of the Lodge, openly imputed his detention in England to the power of her own peculiar charms.

Whether the damsels were actually and actively deceived by the honeyed words of this Lothario of the Emerald Isle, or whether he merely allowed them to deceive themselves, and was only passively guilty, I do not pretend to determine — far less do I undertake to defend him. On the contrary, I hold the gentleman to have been in either case a most indefensible flirt, since it was morally impossible but three at least of the unhappy quartet must be doomed to undergo the pangs of disappointed love. I am sorry to say, that Tim Murphy was far from seeing this in a proper point of view.

“Arrah, Mrs. Cotton, dear!” (said he to the housekeeper at Denham, who was lecturing him on turning the maidens’ heads, especially the two under her management,) — “Arrah now, what am I to do? Sure you would not have a man marry four wives at oncet, barring he were a Turk or a blackamore! But if you can bring the faymales to ’gree, so as to toss up heads or tails, or draw lots as to which shall be the woman that owns me, and then to die off, one after another, mind you, according to law, why I’m the boy for ’em all — and bad luck to the hindmost! Only let them meet and settle the matter in pace and *quiteness*, barring scratching and fighting, and I’ll come at a whistle.”

And off he walked, humming “Garryowen,” leaving Mrs. Cotton rather more provoked than it suited her dignity to acknowledge.

About this time, — that is to say, on a Saturday afternoon towards the middle of November, — Mary Marshall and Mrs. Drake, the widowed aunt with whom she lived, were sitting over their tea in a room no bigger than a closet, behind a little milliner’s shop in one of the smallest houses in Bristol-street. Tiny as the shop was, the window was still too large for the stock with which it was set forth; consisting of two or three bonnets belonging to Mary’s business, and two or three caps,

with half-a-dozen frills and collars, and a few balls of cotton and pieces of tape, as Mrs. Drake's share of the concern: added to which, conspicuously placed in the centre pane, was a box of tooth-powder, a ghastly-looking row of false human teeth, and an explanatory card, informing the nobility and gentry of Belford and its vicinity that Doctor Joseph Vanderhagen, of Amsterdam, *odontist* to a round dozen of highnesses and high mightinesses, was for a limited period sojourning at Mrs. Drake's in Bristol-street, and would undertake to extract teeth in the most difficult cases without pain, or danger, or delay,—so that, as the announcement expressed it, “the operation should be in itself a pleasure,—and to furnish sets better than real, warranted to perform all the offices of articulation and mastication in an astonishing manner, for a sum so small as to surprise the most rigid economist.”

Where Mrs. Drake contrived to put her lodgers might reasonably be matter of surprise to the best contriver; and indeed an ill-wishing neighbour, a rival at once in lodging-letting and millinery, maliciously suggested that they must needs sleep in her empty bandboxes. But the up-stair closets, which she was pleased to call her first floor, were of some celebrity in the town—to those in search of cheap and genteel apartments, on account of the moderate rent, the cleanliness, and the civil treatment; to the inhabitants and other observers, on account of the kind of persons whom they were accustomed to see there, and who were ordinarily itinerants of the most showy and notorious description. French stays and French shoes had alternately occupied the centre pane: and it had displayed, in quick succession, pattern-pictures by artists who undertook to teach drawing as expeditiously and with as little trouble as Doctor Vanderhagen drew teeth; and likenesses in profile, executed by painters to whom, without any disrespect, may be assigned the name of “The Black Masters,” whose portraits rivalled in cheapness the false grinders of the *odontist*. She had accommodated a glass-spinner and his furnaces, a showman and his dancing-dogs, a wandering lecturer, a she-fortuneteller, a he-ventriloquist, and a vaulter on the tight-rope. Her last inmates had been a fine flashy foreign couple, all dirt and tinsel, rags and trumpery, who called themselves Monsieur and Madame de Gourbillon, stuck a guitar and a flute in the window, and announced what they were pleased to

call a "Musical Promenade" in the Townhall. The name was ingeniously novel and mysterious, and *made fortune*, as our French neighbours say: and poor Mrs. Drake walked herself off her feet in accompanying Madame round the town to dispose of their tickets, and secure the money. When the night of the performance arrived, the worthy pair were found to have decamped. They left Bristol Street under pretence of going to meet an eminent singer, whom they expected, they said, by the London stage; and were afterwards discovered to have mounted the roof of a Bath coach bound to London, having contrived, under different pretences, to remove their musical instruments and other goods and chattels; thus renewing the old hoax of the bottle-conjuror, at the expense of the weary audience, who were impatiently pacing the Townhall—of two fiddlers, engaged for the purpose of completing the accompaniments—of the man who had engaged to furnish lights and refreshments—of poor Mrs. Drake, who, in addition to her bill for lodgings, had disbursed many small sums, in the way of provisions and other purchases, which she could ill afford to lose—and of her good-humoured niece, Mary Marshall, whom Madame had not only cheated out of an expensive bonnet by buying that for which she never meant to pay, but had also defrauded of her best shawl in the way of borrowing.

"It was enough," as Mrs. Drake observed, "to warn her against harbouring foreigners in her house, as long as she lived. No painted Madames or Mounseers, with bobs in their ears, should cheat her again."

How it happened that, in the teeth of this wise resolution, the next tenant of the good widow's first floor should be Doctor Joseph Vanderhagen, was best known to herself. For certain, the doctor had no bobs in his ears, and no painted Madame in his company; and, for as much a Dutchman as he called himself, had far more the air of a Jew from White-chapel than of a citizen from Amsterdam. He was a dark sallow man, chiefly remarkable for a pair of green spectacles, and a dark blue cloak of singular amplitude, both of which he wore rather as articles of decoration than of convenience. And certainly the cloak, arranged in most melodramatic drapery, and the spectacles, adjusted with a peculiarly knowing air, had no small effect in arresting the attention of our Belfordians, and still more in attracting the farmers, and their

wives and daughters, on a Saturday morning, when the doctor was sure to plant himself on one side of the market-place, and seldom failed to excite the curiosity of the passers-by. Doctor Joseph Vanderhagen, in his cloak and his spectacles, was worth a score of advertisements and a whole legion of bill-stickers. It was enough to bring on a fit of the toothache to look at him.

In other respects, the man was perfectly well conducted; cheated nobody except in the way of his profession; was civil to his hostess, and very well disposed to fall in love with her niece; making, according to Mrs. Drake's account (who amused herself sometimes with reckoning up the list on her fingers), the two-and-twentieth of Mary Marshall's beaux.

How this little damsel came to have so many admirers it is difficult to say, for she had neither the beauties nor the faults which usually attract a multitude of lovers. She was not pretty—that is quite certain; nor was she what is generally called a flirt, particularly in her rank of life, being perfectly modest and quiet in her demeanour, and peculiarly unshowy in her appearance. Still there was a charm, and a great charm, in her delicate and slender figure, graceful and pliant in every motion—in the fine expression of her dark eyes, with their flexible brows and long eyelashes—in a smile combining much sweetness with some archness—and in a soft low voice, and a natural gentility of manner, which would have rendered it the easiest thing in the world to have passed off Mary Marshall for a young lady.

Little did Mary Marshall meditate such a deception! She, whilst her aunt was leisurely sipping her fourth cup of tea, lecturing her all the while after that approved but disagreeable fashion which aunts and godmothers, and other advisers by profession, call talking to young people for their good,—she having turned down her empty tea-cup, and given it three twirls according to rule, was now occupied in examining the position which the dregs of tea remaining in it had assumed, and trying to tell her own fortune, or rather to accommodate what she saw to what she wished, by those very fallacious but very conformable indications.

“Now, Mary, can there be any thing so provoking as your wanting to go to Denham Farm to-night, in such a fog, and almost dark, just to carry Charlotte Higg's straw bonnet?”

It will be four o'clock before you are ready to set off, and thieves about, and you coughing all night and all day! Any body would think you were crazy. What would your grand relation and godmother Madam Cotton say, I wonder, if she knew of your tramping about after dark? — She that warned me not to let you go into the way of any of those Denham chaps, especially those Lanes, who are no better than so many poachers and vagrants. I should not wonder if that tall fellow Charles Lane came to be hanged. What would Mrs. Cotton say to your going right amongst them, knowing as you do that Charles Lane and Tom Hill fought about you last Michaelmas that ever was? What would Mrs. Cotton say, she that means to give you a power of money, if you are but discreet and prudent as a young woman ought to be? You know yourself that Madam Cotton hates Charles Lane, and would be as mad as a March hare."

"Look aunt," said Mary, still poring over her tea-cup and showing the hieroglyphics round the bottom to her aunt, — "Look! if there is not the road I'm going to-night as plainly marked as in a picture. Look there! the tall chimneys at Bristol Place; and the flat, low houses on the terrace; and the two lamp-posts at the turnpike, and the avenue, and the lodges, and then the turn round the Park to the Farm, — look! and then a tall stranger."

"That's Charles Lane!" interrupted Mrs. Drake; — "he's as tall as the Monument, and, as Madam Cotton says, no better than a thief. He'll certainly come to be hanged — everybody says he has not done a stroke of work this twelve-month, and lives altogether by poaching or thieving. And Tom Hill is noted for having beaten his own poor old mother, so that he's no better. And the town chaps are pretty near as bad," continued Mrs. Drake, going on with the beadroll of Mary's lovers; "for Will Meadows, the tinman, he tipples; and Sam Fielding, the tailor, he plays all day and all night at four-corners; and Bob Henshall, the shoemaker lad, he — But are you really going?" pursued Mrs. Drake, perceiving that Mary had laid down her tea-cup and was tying on her bonnet. "Are you really going out all by yourself this foggy evening?"

"Yes, dear aunt! I promised Charlotte Higgs her bonnet — she must have it to go to church to-morrow; and I shall

just fall in with the children going back from school, and I'll have nothing to say to Charles Lane or Tom Hill, and I'll be back in no time," cried Mary, catching up her bandbox and preparing to set off just as Dr. Vanderhagen entered the shop.

"If you will go, take my shawl," said Mrs. Drake. "'Tis not so good as that which Mrs. Cotton gave you and the French Madam cheated you out of, but 'twill keep out the damp; — don't be obstinate, there's a dear, but put it on at once."

"Meese had bedere take my cloak," interrupted the doctor, gallantly flinging its ample folds over her slight figure, and accompanying the civility by a pressing offer of his own escort; which Mary declined, accepting by way of compromise the loan of the mysterious mantle, and sallying forth into Bristol-street just as the lamps were lighting.

"It's lucky it's so dark," thought Mary to herself, as she tripped lightly along, carefully avoiding the school-children, — "it's well it's so dark, for everybody knows the doctor's cloak, and one should not like to be seen in it; though it was very kind in him to lend it to me, that I must say; and it's ungrateful in me to dislike him so much, only that people can't help their likings or dislikings. Now my aunt, she likes the doctor; but I don't quite think she wants me to marry him either, because of his being a foreigner. She can't abide foreigners since the Mounseer with the ear-bobs. But to think of her fancying that I cared for Charles Lane!" thought Mary, smiling to herself very saucily, as she walked rapidly up the avenue. "Charles Lane indeed! I wonder what she and Mrs. Cotton would say if they knew the truth!" thought Mary, sighing and pursuing her reverie. "Tim says he's a favourite with the old lady; but then he's so poor, and a sort of a foreigner into the bargain, and there's no telling what they might say; so it's as well they should have Charles Lane in their heads. But where can Tim be this dark, *unked* night?" thought poor Mary, as, leaving the lodges to the right, she turned down a lonely road that led to the Farm, about a quarter of a mile distant. "He promised to meet me at the park-gate at half-past four; and here it must be nearer to five, and no signs of the gentleman. Some people would be frightened," said the poor trembling lass to herself, trying to *feel* valiant, — "some people would be frightened out of their wits, walking all by themselves after sunset, in

such a fog that one can't see an inch before one, and in such a lonesome way, and thieves about."

And just at this point of her soliloquy a noise was heard in the hedge, and a ruffian seizing hold of her, demanded her money or her life.

Luckily the villain had only grasped the thick cloak ; and undoing the fastenings with instinctive rapidity, Mary left the mantle in his hands and ran swiftly towards the Farm, hardly able, from the beating of her heart, to ascertain whether she was pursued, though she plainly heard the villain swearing at her escape. In less than two minutes, a pleasanter sound greeted her ears, in the shape of a well-known whistle ; and with the ejaculation " Oh, Tim ! why did not you meet me as you promised ? " she almost fell into his extended arms.

" Is it why I did not meet you, Mary dear ? " responded Tim tenderly : " sorrow a bit could I come before now anyhow ! There has been a spalpeen of a thief, who has kilt John the futman, and murdered Mrs. Cotton, who were walking this way from Belford to the Park by cause of its shortness ; and he knocked John on the head with a bludgeon, and stole a parcel of law dades belonging to the master ; and the master is madder nor a mad bull, because he says that all his estates and titles lays in the parcel — which seems to be sure a mighty small compass for them to be in. And the cowardly spalpeen, after flinging John under the ditch, murdered Mrs. Cotton, and tore off her muff tippet, and turned her pockets inside out — them great panniers of pockets of hers — and stole all her thread-cases, and pincushions, and thimbles, and scissors, and a needle-book worked by some forrin queen, and a bundle of love-letters two-and-forty years ould ; — think of that, Mary dear ! Poor ould lady ! she was young in them days. So she's as mad as the master. And they've sent all the world over to offer a reward for the thief, and raise the country ; and I'm away to the town to fetch the mayor and corporation, and the poliss and the constable, and all them people ; for it's hanged the rogue must be as sure as he's alive, — though I suppose he's far enough off by this time."

" He was here not five minutes ago," replied Mary, " and robbed me of the doctor's cloak — Doctor Vanderhagen ; — so pray let us go on to the Farm, dear Tim, for fear of his

knocking you down too, and murdering you, like poor John and Mrs. Cotton ; though, if she's dead, I don't understand how she can be so mad for the loss of the love-letters ! ”

“ Dead ! no — only kilt ! Sure the woman may be murdered without being dead ! And as for the knocking me down, I'll give the thief free lave to do that same — knock me down, and pickle me, and ate me into the bargain, if he can. I'm a Connaught boy, as he'll find to his cost and not a slip of a futman like John, or an ould faymale like Mrs. Cotton, all the while maning no disrespect to either ; and my twig of a tree ” (flourishing a huge cudgel) “ is as good as his bit of oak, any day. So come along Mary dear. I undertuk for the mayor and the poliss and the constable ; and sorrow a reward do I want, for the villain desarves hanging worse nor ever for frightening you and staling the Doctor's big cloak.”

So, in spite of Mary's reluctance, they pursued the way to Belford. Tim loitered a little as they got near to where Mary thought she had been robbed, — for she had been too much frightened and the evening was too dark to allow of her being very positive in the matter of locality ; and although the fog and the increasing darkness made his seeing the thief almost impossible, Tim could not help loitering and thumping the hedge (or as he called it, the ditch) with his great stick, pretty much after the fashion of sportsmen beating for a hare. He had, however nearly given up the pursuit, when Mary stumbled over something that turned out to be her own bandbox, containing Charlotte Higgs's bonnet, which she had never missed before, and at the same moment close beside her, just within the bushes which her lover had been beating, came the welcome sound of a violent fit of sneezing.

“ Luck be with you, barring it's the snuff ! ” ejaculated our friend Tim, following the sound, and dragging out the unhappy sneezer by Dr. Vanderhagen's cloak, which he had probably been induced to assume for the convenience of carriage : “ luck be with you ! ” exclaimed Tim, folding the strong broadcloth round and round his prisoner, whom he rolled up like a bale of goods, whilst he halloed to one party advancing with lanterns from the farm, and another running with a candle from the lodge, — dim lights which, when seen from a distance moving through the fog, no trace of the bearers

being visible, had something of the appearance of a set of jack-'o-lanterns.

As they advanced, however, each faintly illuminating its own small circle, and partially dispelling the obscurity, it was soon discovered, aided by the trampling of many footsteps and the confused sound of several voices, that a considerable number of persons were advancing to the assistance of our Irish friend.

Little did he need their aid. The Connaught boy and his shillelah would have been equal to the management of half-a-dozen foot-pads in his single person.

"Hand me that dark-lantern, John Higgs, till we take a look at this jontleman's beautiful countenance," quoth Tim. "She gives as much light," continued Tim, apostrophizing the lantern, "as the moon when it's set, — and that's none at all! Lie *quite*," added he, addressing his prisoner, "lie *quite*, can't ye? and take the world asy till we sarch ye dacently. Arrah! there's the coach parcel, with them dades and titles of the master's. And there's Madam Cotton's big pin-cushion and all her trimtrams hid in the ditch — ay, this is them! Hould the lantern a bit lower; — here's the hussey, and there's the love-letters, wet through, at the bottom of the pool — all in a sop, poor ould lady! I'm as sorry as ever was for the sopping of them love-letters, because I dare say, being used to 'em so long, she'd fancy 'em better nor new ones. Arrah! an't you ashamed of yourself to look at that housewife, worked by a forrin queen, all over mud as it is? Can't you answer a civil question you spalpeen? Ought not you to be ashamed of yourself, first for thieving, then for sopping them poor dear love-letters, and then for being such a fool as to stay here to be caught like a fox in a trap? I suppose you thought the fog was not dark enough, and so waited for the stars to shine, — eh, Mr. Lane?"

"Mr. Lane! Charles Lane!" exclaimed Mary, stooping to examine the prostrate thief. "Yes, it really is Charles Lane! How strange!" added she, thinking of her aunt's prediction, and of the tall stranger in the tea-cup to which she had given so different an interpretation — "how very strange!"

"Nay," rejoined Mr. Denham, advancing into the circle, "I have long feared that poaching, and drunkenness, and idle-

ness, would bring him to some deplorable catastrophe. But, Tim, you are fairly entitled to the reward that I was about to offer ; so come with me to the Park, and——”

“Not I, your honour ! It's little Mary here that was the cause of catching the thief,—little Mary and the doctor's cloak ; and it's them,—that is to say, Mary and the cloak,—that's entitled to the reward.”

“But, my good fellow, I must do something to recompense the service you have rendered me by your spirit and bravery. Follow me to the house, and then——”

“Sure I'd follow your honour to the end of the world, let alone the house ! But,” continued Tim, approaching Mr. Denham and speaking in a confidential whisper ; “sorrow a bit of a reward do I want, except it's little Mary herself ; and if your honour would be so good as to spake a word for us to Mrs. Cotton and Mrs. Drake,” added Tim, twirling his hat, and putting on his most insinuating manner——“if your honour would but spake a good word—becase Mrs. Drake calls me a forriner, and Mrs. Cotton says I'm a deçavier,—one word from your honour——” pursued Tim coaxingly.

“And what does Mary say ?” inquired Mr. Denham.

“Is it what little Mary says, your honour ? Arrah, now ask her ! But it's over-shy she is !” exclaimed Tim, throwing his arm round Mary's slender waist as she turned away in blushing confusion ; “she'll not tell her mind afore company. But the best person to ask is ould Mrs. Cotton, who told me this very morning that I was a deçavier, and that there was not a faymale in the parish who would say No to a wild Irishman. Best ask her. She'll be out of her flurry and her tantrums by this time ; for I left her making tay out of coffee, and drinking a drop of dark-coloured whisky—cherry-bounce the futman called it—to comfort her after the fright she got, poor cratur ! Jist ask her. It's remarkable,” continued Tim, as obeying his master's kind commands, he and the fair damsel followed Mr. Denham to the house, under a comfortable persuasion that the kind word would be spoken ; “it's remarkable, anyhow,” said Tim, “that them dades and titles, and the pincushion, which would not have minded a wettinga halfpenny, should be high and dry in the ditch ; and that te forrin queen's needle-book, and them ould ancient love-lettes should have the luck of a sopping. Well, it was no fault of

ours, Mary dear, as his honour can testify. The spalpeen of a thief deserves to be sent over the water, if it was only in respect to them love-letters."

And so saying, the Irishman and his fair companion reached the mansion. And how Mr. Denham pleaded, and whether Mrs. Cotton and Mrs. Drake, "the ould faymales," as Tim irreverently called them, proved tender-hearted or obdurate, I leave the courteous reader to settle to his own satisfaction: for my own part, if I were called on to form a conjecture, it would be, that the Irishman proved irresistible, and the lovers were made happy.

MARK BRIDGMAN.

ONE of the persons best known in Belford was an elderly gentleman seldom called by any other appellation than that of Mark Bridgman—or, as the irreverent youth of the place were sometimes wont to style him, Picture Mark.

Why he should be spoken of in a manner so much more familiar than respectful, were difficult to say; for certainly there was nothing in his somewhat shy and retiring manner to provoke familiarity, whilst there was everything in his mild and venerable aspect to secure respect.

True it was, that the grave and old-fashioned garments in which his slight and somewhat bent figure was constantly arrayed, betrayed a smallness of worldly means which his humble dwelling and still more humble establishment—for his whole household consisted of one ancient serving maiden, still more slight and bent than her master—did not fail to corroborate; and perhaps that impression of poverty, aided by the knowledge of his want of patrimonial distinction, (for he was the son of a tradesman in the town,) and still more, his having been known to the older inhabitants from boyhood, and resided amongst them for many years, might serve to counteract the effect of the diffident and somewhat punctilious manner which in general ensures a return of the respect that it evinces, as well as of a head and countenance which a painter

would have delighted to delineate—so strikingly fine was the high, bald, polished forehead, so delicately carved the features, and so gentle and amiable the expression.

Mark Bridgman had been the youngest of two sons of a Belford tradesman, who being of the *right* side in politics, (which in those days meant the Tory side,) contrived to get this his youngest son a clerkship in a public office; whilst his elder hope, active, bustling, ambitious, and shrewd, pushed his fortune in his father's line of business in London, and accumulated during a comparatively short life so much money that his only surviving son was enabled at his death to embark in bolder speculations, and was at the time of which I write, a flourishing merchant in the city.

Mark was, on his side, so entirely free from the visions of avarice, that, as soon as he had remained long enough in his office to entitle him to such a pension as should enable himself and his solitary servant-maid to exist in tolerable comfort, he forsook the trade of quill-driving, and returned to his native town to pass the remainder of his days in one of the smallest dwellings in Mill Lane. It was true that he had received some thousands with a wife who had died within a few months of their marriage, and that he had also received a legacy of about the same amount from his father; but these sums were not to be taken into the account of his ways and means, inasmuch as they had been spent after a fashion which, if the disembodied spirit retain its ancient prejudices, might almost have drawn that thriving ironmonger back into this wicked world to express, in ghostly form, the extent of his indignation.

Be it wise or not, the manner in which these moneys had been expended not only served to explain his honourable nickname, but had rendered Mark Bridgman's back parlour in Mill Lane one of the lions of Belford.

In that small room, — small with reference to its purpose, but very large as compared with the rest of the dwelling, and lighted from the top, as all buildings for pictures ought to be, — in that little back parlour were assembled some half-dozen chefs-d'œuvre, that the greatest collection of the world might have been proud to have included amongst the choicest of its treasures: a landscape by Both, all sunshine; one by Ruysdael, all dew; a land-storm by Wouvermans, in looking at

which one seemed to feel the wind, and folded one's raiment about one involuntarily ; a portrait of Mieris by himself, in which, inspired perhaps by vanity, he united his own finish to the graces of Vandyke ; a Venus by Titian — need one say more ? — and two large pictures on the two sides of the room, of which, all unskilled in art as I confessedly am, I must needs attempt a description, the more inadequate perhaps because the more detailed.

One was a landscape with figures, by Salvator Rosa, called, I believe, after some scriptural story, but really consisting of a group of Neapolitan peasants, some on horseback, some on foot, defiling through a pass in the mountains — emerging, as it were, from darkness into light. The effect of this magnificent picture cannot be conveyed by words. The spectator seemed to be in darkness too, looking from the dusky gloom of the cavernous rocks and overhanging trees into the light and air, the figures thrown out in strong relief ; and all this magical effect produced, as it seemed, almost without colour — a little blue, perhaps, on the edge of the palette — by the mere force of chiaroscuro. One never sees Salvator Rosa's compositions without wonder ; but this landscape, in its simple grandeur, its power of fixing itself on the eye, the memory, the imagination, seems to me to transcend them all.

The other was an historical picture by Guercino — David with the head of Goliath, — a picture which, in spite of the horror of the subject, is the very triumph of beauty. The ghastly face, which is so disposed that the eye can get away from it, serves to contrast and relieve the splendid and luxuriant youth and grace of the other figures. David, the triumphant warrior, the inspired poet, glowing with joy and youthful modesty, is fitly accompanied by two female figures ; the one a magnificent brunette, beating some oriental instrument not unlike a drum, with her dark hair flowing down on each side of her bright and beaming countenance ; the other, a fair young girl, lightly and exquisitely formed, bending her lovely face over a music-book, with just such a sweet unconsciousness, such a mixture of elegance and innocence, as one should wish to see in a daughter of one's own. A great poet once said of that picture, that "it was the Faun with colour ;" and most surely it is not possible even for Grecian art to carry farther the mixture of natural and ideal gracefulness.

These pictures, for which he had over and over again refused a sum of money almost too large to mention, formed, together with two or three chairs so placed as best to display to the sitter the Salvator and the Guercino, the sole furniture of Mark Bridgman's back parlour. He had purchased them himself, during two or three short trips to the Continent, at Rome, at Naples, at Vienna, at Antwerp, and having expended his last shilling in the formation of his small but choice selection, sat himself quietly down in Mill Lane, without any thought of increase or exchange, enjoying their beauties with a quiet delight which (although he was kindly anxiously to give to those who loved paintings the pleasure of seeing his) hardly seemed to require the praise and admiration of others to stimulate his own pleasure in their possession. It was a very English feeling. Some of the Dutch burgomasters had, in days of yore, equally valuable pictures in equally small rooms: but there was more of vanity in the good Hollanders; vanity of country, for their paintings were Dutch,—and vanity of display, for their collections were known and visited by all travellers, and made a part, and a most ostensible part, of their riches.

Our good Englishman had no such ambition. He loved his pictures for themselves; and if he had any pride in knowing himself to be their possessor, showed it only in not being at all ashamed of his poverty,—in thinking, and seeming to think, that the owner of those great works of art could afford to wear a thread-bare coat and live in a paltry dwelling. Even his old servant Martha seemed to have imbibed the same feeling,—loved the Guercino and the Salvator as fondly as her master did, spoke of them with the same respect, approached them with the same caution, and dusted the room as reverently as if she had been in presence of a crowned queen.

In these pictures Mark Bridgman lived and breathed. He cultivated no associates, visited nobody, read no books, looked at no newspapers, and, except in the matter of his own paintings, showed little of the common quality termed curiosity or the rarer one called taste.

Two acquaintances indeed he had made during his long sojourn at Belford, and their society he had enjoyed with the relish of a congenial spirit: Louis Duval, to whom he had during his boyhood shown great kindness, and who had stu-

died his Guercino with a love and admiration rivalling that which he felt for Mrs. St. Eloy's Vandyke ; and Mr. Carlton, who was a professed lover of pictures, and had not failed to find his out during his two years' sojourn in Belford. And when the death of Mrs. St. Eloy left Louis master of the Nunnery, and his marriage with our young friend Hester (of which happy event I rejoice to be enabled to inform my readers) brought the two families together, sometimes at the Nunnery, and sometimes at Cranley Park, the old man was tempted out oftener than he or his maid Martha had thought possible.

Another person had tried to form an intimacy with him — no less a personage than Mr. King Harwood, who liked nothing better than flourishing and showing off before a great picture, and descanting on the much finer works of art which he had seen abroad and at home. But gentle and placid as our friend Mark was, he could not stand King Harwood ; he was not man of the world enough to have learned the art of hearing a coxcomb talk nonsense about a favourite object without wincing. To hear his paintings mispraised, went to his heart ; so he fairly fled the field, and whenever Mr. King Harwood brought a party to Mill Lane, left Martha, who, besides being far less sensitive, had Sir Joshua's advantage of being a little deaf, to play the part of cicerone to his collection.

His nephew Harry also — a kind, frank, liberal, open-hearted man, to whom during his boyhood our connoisseur had been an indulgent and generous uncle, — paid him great attention ; and of him and his excellent wife, and promising family, Mark Bridgman was perhaps as fond as of any thing in this world, excepting his pictures, which for certain he loved better than any body. Indeed for many years he had cared for nothing else ; and the good old man sometimes wondered how he had been beguiled lately into bestowing so much affection upon creatures of flesh and blood, — since, besides his kinsman and his family, he had detected himself in feeling something very like friendship towards Louis and Hester, Mr. Carlton and old Martha, and even towards Mrs. Kinlay and Mrs. Duval. To be sure, Louis was a man of genius, and Mr. Carlton a man of taste, and Martha a faithful old servant ; and as to Hester, why every body did love Hester, — and besides, she was a good deal like the young girl with the music-book in his Guercino, and that accounted for his taking a fancy to her. It is remarkable that the good people who

loved Hester, they could hardly tell why, used generally to conjure up some likeness to reconcile themselves to themselves for being caught by her fascinations. I myself think that she resembles a young friend of my own. — But we must come back to our story.

The uncle and nephew had not met for a longer time than usual, when, one bright April morning as Mark was sitting in his back parlour admiring for the thousandth time the deeply tinted and almost breathing lips of the Titian Venus, a hasty knock was heard at the door, and Harry Bridgman rushed into the room, pale, hurried, agitated, trembling; and before his kinsman, always nervous and slow of speech, could inquire what ailed him, poured forth a tale of mercantile embarrassments, of expected remittances, and lingering argosies and merciless creditors, that might have shamed the perplexities of Antonio at the hour when Shylock claimed his money or his bond.

“I may have been imprudent in giving these acceptances,” (said poor Harry,) “but I looked for letters from the house at Hamburg, which ought to have been here the 24th, and bills from St. Petersburg, which should have arrived a fortnight since, and would have covered the whole amount. Then the Flycatcher from Honduras has been expected these ten days, with logwood and mahogany, and the Amphion from the Levant, has been looked for full three weeks, with a cargo of Smyrna fruit, that would have paid every farthing that I owe in the world. Assets to the value of six times my debts are on the seas, and yet such is the state of the money-market, that I have been unable to raise the ten thousand pounds which must be paid to-morrow, and which not being paid, the rascal who holds my acceptances, and who owes me an old grudge, will strike a docket, and all will be swept away by a commission of bankruptcy — all swallowed up in law and knavery: my wife’s heart broken, my children ruined, my creditors cheated, and I myself disgraced for ever!” And Harry Bridgman, a fine hearty man in the middle of life, active, bold, and vigorous in mind and body, laid his hands upon the back of a chair, sunk his face into them, and wept aloud.

“Ten thousand pounds!” ejaculated the poor old man, his venerable bald head shaking as if with palsy — “ten thousand pounds!”

“Yes, sir! ten thousand pounds,” replied Harry. “God

forgive me," added he, "for distressing you in this manner! But I am doomed to be a grief to all whom I love. I hardly know why I came here — only I could not stay at home. I could not look on poor Maria's face, or the innocent children. And I thought you ought to know what was about to happen, that you might go to Cranley Park, or the Nunnery, till the name had been in the Gazette and the people had done talking. But I'll go now, for I cannot bear to see you so distressed: I would almost as soon face Maria and the children. Good-b'ye, my dear uncle! God bless you!" said poor Harry, trying to speak firmly. "There are some hours yet. Perhaps the letters may arrive, or the ships. Perhaps times may mend!"

"Stay, Harry!" cried his uncle; "stay! We must not trust to ships and letters; we must not let Maria's heart be broken. *They* must go," said the old man, looking round the room and pointing to the Guercino and the Salvator: "they must be sold!"

"What! the pictures, sir? Oh no! no! the sacrifice is too great. You must not part with the pictures."

"They must go," replied the old man firmly; and walking slowly round the little room from one to the other, as if to take leave of them, and wiping his handkerchief a speck of dust which the bright sunshine had made visible on the sunny Both, he left the apartment, locking the door behind him and carrying away the key.

"Louis Duval and Mr. Carlton have both said often and often, that they would gladly give ten thousand pounds for seven such pictures," said Mark Bridgman, taking his hat: "they are both now in the neighbourhood, and I have no doubt of their making the purchase. Don't object, Harry! Don't thank me! Don't talk to me!" pursued the good old man, checking his nephew's attempt at interruption with a little humour; "don't speak to me on the subject, for I can't bear it. But come with me to the Nunnery."

Silently the kinsmen walked thither, and in almost equal silence (for there was a general respect for the old man's feelings) did they, accompanied by Louis and Mr. Carlton, return. The party stopped at the Belford Bank, and there they parted; Harry armed with a check for ten thousand pounds to pay off his merciless creditor.

"Go to London, Harry," said the old man, "and say no

more about the matter. I have made idols of these pictures, and it is perhaps good for me that I should be deprived of them. Go to Maria and the children, and be happy !”

And, his warm heart aching with gratitude and regret, Harry obeyed.

Mark on his side went back to Mill Lane, not quite unhappy, because his conscience was satisfied ; but yet feeling at *his* heart's core the full price of the sacrifice that he had made. He dared not trust himself again with a sight of the pictures ; he dared not tell Martha that he had sold them, for he knew that her regrets would awaken his own. He had begged Mr. Duval to convey them away early the next morning, and in the very few words that had passed, (for in making the bargain he had limited Louis to yes or no,) had desired him to send the key, which he left with him, by the messenger ; and on going to bed at night, he summoned courage to inform Martha that the pictures were to be delivered to the bearer of the key of the room where they were deposited, and charged her not to come to him until they were fairly removed.

He spoke in a lower voice than usual, and yet it is remarkable that the poor old woman, usually so deaf, heard every word with a painful and startling distinctness. She had thought that something very grievous was the matter from the moment of Harry's arrival, but such a grief as this she had never even contemplated ; and forbidden by her master from giving vent to her vexation before him, and unable to get at the beloved objects of her sorrow, the dear pictures, she sat down on the ground by the locked door and solaced herself by a hearty cry, of which the tendency was so composing that she went to bed and slept nearly as well as usual.

Very different was her master's case. Men have so many advantages over women, that they need not grudge them the unspeakable comfort of crying ; although in many instances, and especially in this, it makes all the difference between a good night and a bad one. Mark never closed his eyes. His waking thoughts, however were not all unpleasant. He thought of Maria and the children, and of Harry's generous reluctance to deprive him of his treasures — and so long as he thought of that he was happy. And then he thought of Louis Duval, — how well he deserved these pictures, and how much he would value them ; for Mark had been amongst Louis' earliest patrons and kindest friends, and would undoubtedly have served

Henry Warner, had he not been abroad during the few months that he spent at Belford. And then too he thought of Hester, and of her resemblance to the girl with the music-book. But unluckily that recollection brought vividly before him the Guercino itself, — and how he could live without that picture he could not tell ! And then the night seemed endless.

At last morning dawned. But no sound was heard of cart or waggon, or messenger from the Nunnery, though he had implored Louis to send by daybreak. Five o'clock struck, and six, and seven, — and no one had arrived. At last, a little before eight, a single knock was heard at the door, but no cart, — a single knock ; and after a moment's parley, the *knocker* went away, and the postman arrived, and, too impatient to wait longer, the old gentleman rang the bell for his housekeeper.

Martha arrived, bringing two letters. One, a heavy packet, had been left by a servant ; the other had arrived by the post. As our friend Mark opened the first, a key dropped out. The contents were as follows :

“ The Nunnery, April 18th.

“ My dear Sir,

“ As I obeyed you implicitly yesterday, when you forbade me to say any thing more than yes or no, you must allow me to claim from you to-day an obedience equally implicit. I return the key, with an earnest entreaty that you will condescend to be the guardian of that and of the pictures. Long, very long may you continue so ! Hester says that she never should see those pictures with comfort anywhere but in their own gallery, the dear back parlour ; and you know that Hester always has her own way with everybody.

“ From the little that you would suffer Mr. H. Bridgman to say yesterday, both Mr. Carlton and myself are inclined to consider this money as a loan, to be returned at his convenience ; and our chief fear is lest he should hurry himself in the repayment.

“ Should it, however, prove otherwise, just remember how very, very kind you were to me, a poor and obscure boy, at a time when your money, your encouragement, your good word, and, above all, your permission to copy the Guercino, were favours far greater than I ever can return. Recollect that I owe to the study of the girl with the music-book that notice from Mr. Carlton which led to my acquaintance with Hester.

“After this, you must allow, that even if this sum were never repaid, the balance of obligation must still be on my side,—and that I must always remain

“Your grateful friend and servant,

“LOUIS DUVAL.”

With a trembling hand the old man opened the other letter. He had had some trouble in deciphering Louis's, perhaps because he had been obliged to wipe his spectacles so often; and this epistle, although shorter and written in a bold mercantile hand, proved more difficult still. Thus it ran:

“London, April 17th.

“MY DEAR UNCLE,

“On my return to town, I found that remittances had arrived from Hamburgh and St. Petersburg; that the good ship *Amphion* was safe in port, and that the *Flycatcher* had been spoken with and was within two days' sail;—in short, that all was right in all quarters; and that Maria, until I told her the story, had not even suspected my embarrassments. Imagine our intense thankfulness to you and to Heaven! I have returned the check to Mr. Duval. The obligation I do not even wish to cancel; for to be grateful to such a person is a most pleasurable feeling. I am quite sure, from the very few words that you would suffer any one to speak yesterday, that he considers the affair as a loan, and that the dear pictures are still in the dear back parlour. I forgot to tell you that the *Amphion* was to touch at Cadiz for two more paintings, a Velasquez and a Murillo; for which, if you cannot find room, Mr. Duval must.

“Once again, accept my most fervent thanks, and believe me ever

“Your obliged and affectionate

“Kinsman and friend,

“H. BRIDGMAN.”

The gentle reader must imagine, for I cannot describe, the feelings of the good old man on the perusal of these letters, and the agitated delight with which, after he and Martha had contrived to open the door, (for, somehow or other, their hands shook so that they could hardly turn the key in the lock,) they both surveyed the rescued treasures. Also, he must settle to

his fancy the long-disputed point (for it has been a contest of no small duration, and is hardly finished yet,) of the ultimate destination of the Velasquez and the Murillo,—whether both went to the Nunnery as Mark Bridgman proposed, or both to Mill Lane as Louis Duval desired ; or whether Hester's reconciling clause were agreed to, and the merchant's grateful present divided between the parties. For my part, if I were inclined to bet upon the occasion, I should lay a considerable wager that the lady had her way. But, as I said before, the courteous reader must settle the matter as seems to him best.

ROSAMOND :

A STORY OF THE PLAGUE.

IN the reign of Charles the Second—that reign over which the dissolute levity of the monarch and his court, and the witty pages of Count Anthony Hamilton, have shed a false and delusive glare, which is sometimes mistaken for gaiety, but in which the people, harassed by perpetual treasons, or rumours of treasons, and visited by such tremendous calamities as the Fire and the Plague, seem to have been anything rather than gay ;—in that troubled and distant reign, Belford was, as now, a place of considerable size and importance ; probably, when considered relatively with the size of other towns and the general population of the kingdom, of as much consequence as at the present time.

True it is, that, in common with other worshipful things, the town “had suffered losses.” The demolition of the abbey had been a blow which a charter from Queen Elizabeth, and even the high honour of bearing her royal effigy in the midst of four other maiden faces for the borough arms, had hardly repaired ; whilst the munificent patronage of Archbishop Laud, a liberal benefactor to the public schools and charities of the place, scarcely made amends for the plunder of the corporation chest,—a measure resorted to on some frivolous

pretext in the preceding reign, amongst many similar ways and means of King Jamie. But the grand evil of all was, that Belford happened to be so near the site of many of the battles and sieges of the Civil War, that the inhabitants had an undesired opportunity of judging with great nicety which of the two contending parties did most harm in friendly quarters, and whether the reprobate cavaliers of the royal army, or the godly troopers of the parliamentary forces, were the more oppressive and mischievous inmates of a peaceful town. Even the wise rule of Cromwell, excellent as regarded the restoration of prosperity within the realm, went but a little way in compensating for the long years of turmoil and disaster through which it had been obtained ; and although warned by the fines and penalties levied on the corporation by James the First of "happy memory," and aware that his grandson had, with somewhat diminished facilities for performing the operation, an equal taste for extracting money from the pockets of the lieges, that prudent body contrived to turn so readily with every wind during that stormy and changeable reign, that even Archbishop Laud's star chamber itself must have pronounced their loyalty as unimpeachable as that of the docile and ductile Vicar of Bray ; yet, such had been the effect of those different drawbacks, of the royal mulcts and fines and penalties, and of the exactions of the soldiery, in the Civil War, that the good town of Belford was hardly so opulent as its importance as a county town and its situation on the great river might seem to indicate, and by no means so gay as might have been expected from its vicinity to London and Oxford, and the royal residences of Hampton and Windsor.

"A dull, dreary, gloomy, ugly place as ever poor maiden was mewed up in !" it was pronounced by the fair Rosamond Norton, the ward and kinswoman of old Anthony Shawe, apothecary and herbalist, at the sign of the Golden Mortar, on the south end of the High Bridge,— "the dullest, dreariest, gloomiest, ugliest place that ever was built by hands ! She was sure," she said, "that there was not such a melancholy, moping town in all England ; and the people in it—the few folk that there were—looked sickly and pining, like the great orange-tree in a little pot in Master Shawe's greenhouse, or fretful and discontented like her own lark in his wired cage. Master Anthony was very kind to her—that she

needs must say ; but Belford and the Golden Mortar was a weary dwelling-place for a young gentlewoman !”

And yet was Belford in those days a pretty place—prettier, perhaps, than now—with its old-fashioned picturesque streets, mingled with trees and gardens radiating from the ample market-place ; its beautiful churches ; the Forbury, with its open lawn and mall-like walk ; the suburban clusters of rural dwellings in the outskirts of the town ; and the bright clear river running through its centre like a waving line of light : a pretty place must Belford have been in those days ! And a prettier dwelling than the Golden Mortar could hardly have been found within the precincts of the town or of the county.

The outward appearance of the house, as seen from the street, was indeed sufficiently unpromising. It was an irregular, low-browed tenement, separated from the river by two or three warehouses and granaries ; and the shop, a couple of steps lower than the street, so that the descent into it had somewhat the effect of walking down into a cellar, was, although sufficiently spacious, dark and gloomy. The shelves, too,—filled with bundles of dried camomile, saxifrage, pellitory, vervain, colemint, and a thousand other such herbs (vide our friend Nicholas Culpeper), with boxes of costly spices, rare gums, and mineral powders, and bottles filled with such oils and distilled waters as formed the fashionable medicines of the time,—had a certain dingy and ominous appearance, much increased by divers stuffed curiosities from foreign parts, amongst which an alligator suspended from the ceiling was the most conspicuous, and sundry glass jars, containing pickled reptiles and insects of various sorts, snakes, lizards, toads, spiders, and locusts ; whilst a dusky, smoky laboratory, into which the shop opened, fitted up with stills, retorts, alembics, furnaces, and all the chemical apparatus of the day, added to the gloominess and discomfort of the general impression.

But, in one corner of that unpleasant-looking shop, fenced from general observation by a brown stuff curtain, was a flight of steps leading into apartments, not large indeed, but so light, so airy, so pleasant, so comfortable, that the transition from one side of the house to the other was like passing from night into day. These were the apartments of Rosamond. They opened too into a large garden, embracing the whole

space behind the granaries and warehouses that led to the river-side, and extending back until stopped by wharfs for coals and timber, too valuable to be purchased:—for his garden was Anthony Shawe's delight; who, a botanist and a traveller, a friend of Evelyn's and a zealous cultivator of foreign plants, had filled the whole plot of ground with rare herbs and choice flowers, and had even attained to the luxury of a cold, damp, dark house for greens, where certain orange and lemon trees, myrtles, laurustinuses, and phillyreas, languished through the winter, and were held for miracles of bounty and profusion if in some unusually fine summer they had strength enough to bear blossoms and fruit. Ah me! what would Master Anthony Shawe and his worthy friend Master Evelyn say if they could but look upon the pits, the stove-houses, the conservatories, the gardening-doings of these horticultural days! I question if steam-boats and railroads would astonish them half so much.

Nevertheless, that garden, in spite of its cold greenhouse, was in its less pretending parts a place of exceeding pleasantness,—rich to profusion in the most beautiful of the English plants and shrubs, pinks, lilies, roses, jessamine, and fragrant in the aromatic herbs of all countries which, together with the roots and leaves of flowers, formed so large a part of the *materia medica* of the time. So exceedingly pleasant was that garden, kept by constant watering in a state of delicious and dewy freshness that might vie with an April meadow, that I could almost sympathise with Anthony Shawe, and wonder what Rosamond could wish for more.

Her little sitting-room was nearly as delightful as the flowery territory into which it led by a broad flight of steps from a small terrace with a stone balustrade, that ran along the back of the house. Master Anthony's ruling taste predominated even in the fitting up of this maiden's bower: the Flemish hangings were gorgeous, with hollyhocks, tulips, poppies, peonies, and other showy blossoms; a beautifully-finished flower-piece, by the old artist Colantonio del Fiore, which Anthony had himself brought from Naples, hung on one side of the room; a silver vessel for perfumes, adorned with an exquisitely-wrought device of vine-leaves with their tendrils, and ivies with their buds, in the matchless chasing of Benvenuto Cellini, stood on a marble slab beneath the mirror; and around

that Venetian mirror was a recent acquisition, a work of art more precious and more beautiful than all — a garland of roses and honeysuckles, of anemones and water-lilies, of the loose pendent laburnum and the close clustering hyacinth, in the unrivalled carving of Gibbon; a garland, whose light and wreathy grace, whose depth and richness of execution, and incomparable truth of delineation, both in the foliage and the blossoms, seemed to want nothing but colour to vie with Nature herself. Persian carpets, gay with the gorgeous vegetation of the East, covered the floor, and the low stool on which she was accustomed to sit; the high-backed ebony chair, sacred to Master Anthony, boasted its bunch of embroidered carnations on the cushion; the vases that crowned the balustrade were filled with aloes and other foreign plants; jessamines and musk-roses were trained around the casements. All was gay and smiling, bright to the eye and sweet to the scent; yet still the ungrateful Rosamond pronounced Belford to be the dullest, dreariest, gloomiest town that ever was built by hands, and the Golden Mortar the saddest and dreariest abode wherein ever young maiden was condemned to sojourn: and if any one of the few neighbours and companions who were admitted to converse with the young beauty ventured, by way of consolation, to advert to the ornaments of her chamber—ornaments so unusual in that rank and age, that their possession excited something of envy mingled with wonder,—the perverse damsel would point to her imprisoned lark, chafing its feathers and beating its speckled breast against the bars of its cage, and ask whether the poor bird were happier for the bars being gilded?

Rosamond Norton was very distantly related to her kind guardian. She was the daughter of one whom, thirty years before (the date of which we are now speaking is 1662), he had loved with a fondness, an ardour, an intensity, a constancy, that deserved a better return:—the object of his passion, a light and laughing beauty, had preferred a gay and gallant cavalier to her grave and studious and somewhat puritanical cousin: had married Reginald Norton, then an officer in the king's service; had followed the fortunes of the royal family; and had led a roving and desultory life, sometimes in great indigence, sometimes in brief gaiety, as remittances from her family in England arrived or failed, until, on the death of

her husband, she returned to take possession, by the clemency of the Lord Protector of her paternal estate near Belford, bringing with her our friend Rosamond, her only surviving daughter ; whom, on her death about a twelvemonth after the Restoration, she bequeathed to the care and guardianship of her true friend and loving kinsman Anthony Shawe.

Anthony, on his part, had felt the influence of his early disappointment throughout his apparently calm and prosperous destiny. For some few years after Mrs. Norton's marriage, he had travelled to Italy and the Levant — countries interesting in every respect to a scientific and inquiring mind, and especially gratifying to his researches in medicine and botany ; and on his return he had established himself in his native town of Belford, pursuing, partly for profit, and partly from an honest desire to be of some service in his generation, the mingled vocation of herbalist, apothecary, and physician. Rich or poor might always command his readiest service — the poor perhaps rather more certainly than the rich ; and his skill, his kindness, and his almost unlimited charity rendered him universally respected and beloved.

Master Anthony had, however, his peculiarities. In religion he was a puritan ; in politics, a roundhead ; and although his peaceful pursuits and quiet demeanour, as well as the general good-will of his neighbours, had protected him from any molestation in the change of government that followed quickly on the death of Cromwell, yet his own strong prejudices, which the licence of Charles's conduct contributed hourly to augment, the rigid austerity of his notions, and the solemn gravity of his deportment, rendered him, however kind and indulgent, no very acceptable guardian to a young and lovely woman, brought up in the contrary extremes of a romantic loyalty, a bigoted attachment to the forms and tenets of the high church, an unrestrained habit of personal liberty, and the love of variety and of innocent amusement natural to a lively and high-spirited girl.

Grateful, affectionate, and amiable in her disposition, with a warm heart and a pliant temper, it is however more than probable that Rosamond Norton would soon have lost, in the affectionate cares of her guardian, her pettish resentment at the unwonted restraints and wearisome monotony of her too tranquil abode, and would have taken root in her new habita-

tion in little more time than it takes to settle a transplanted flower, had not a far deeper and more powerful motive of disunion existed between them.

Whilst wandering with her parents from city to city abroad, she had become acquainted with a lad a few years older than herself — a relation of Rochester's, in the service of the king, — and an attachment warm, fervent, and indissoluble had ensued between the young exiles. When again for a short time in London with her mother, after the Restoration, the faithful lovers had met, and had renewed their engagement. Mrs. Norton, although not opposing the union, had desired some delay, and had died suddenly during the interval, leaving poor Rosamond in the guardianship of one who, of all men alive, was most certain to oppose the marriage. A courtier! a placeman! a kinsman of Rochester! — a favourite of Charles! Master Anthony would have thought present death a more hopeful destiny! That the young man was, in a position replete with danger and temptation, of unimpeachable morality and unexceptionable conduct, — that he was as prudent as he was liberal, as good as he was gay, — mattered little, he would not have believed her assertions, although an angel had come from heaven to attest their truth. The first act of his authority as guardian was to forbid her holding any communication with her lover; and poor Rosamond's bitter declamation on the dulness and ugliness of Belford and the Golden Mortar might all be construed into one simple meaning, — that Belford was a place where Richard Tyson was not.

We have it however upon high authority, that through whatever obstacles may oppose themselves, Love will find out the way; and it is not wonderful that, a few evenings after the commencement of our story, Richard Tyson, young and active, should have rowed his little boat up the river — have moored it in a small creek belonging to the wharf of which we have made mention, at the end of Master Anthony's garden — have climbed by the aid of a pile of timber to the top of the wall — have leaped down on a sloping bank of turf, which rendered the descent safe and easy — and finally have hidden himself in a thicket of roses and honeysuckles, then in full bloom, to await the arrival of the lady of his heart. It was a lovely evening in the latter end of May, glowing, dewy, and fragrant as ever the nightingale selected for the wooing of the

rose ; and before the light had paled in the west, or the evening star glittered in the water, Richard's heart beat high within him at the sound of a light footstep and the rustling of a silken robe. She was alone — he was sure of that — and he began to sing in a subdued tone a few words of a cavalier song which had been the signal of their meetings long ago, when, little more than boy and girl, the affection to which they hardly dared to give a name had grown up between them in a foreign land. He sang a few words of that air which had been his summons at Brussels and the Hague, and in a moment the fair Rosamond, in the flowing dress which Lely has so often painted, and in all the glow of her animated beauty, stood panting and breathless before him.

What need to detail the interview ? He pressed for an instant elopement — an immediate union, authorized by Rochester, connived at by the King ; and she (such is the inconsistency of the human heart !) clung to the guardian whose rule she had thought so arbitrary — the home she had called so dreary : “ she could not and would not leave Master Anthony ; ” all his kindness, his patient endurance of her pettishness, his fond anticipations of her wishes, his affectionate admonitions, his tender cares, rose before her as she thought of forsaking him ; the good old man himself, with his thin and care-bent figure, his sad-coloured suit so accurately neat, and his mild, benevolent countenance, his venerable white head — all rose before her as she listened to the solicitations of her lover. “ She could not leave Master Anthony ! — she would wait till she was of age ! ”

“ When you know, Rosamond, that your too careful mother fixed five-and-twenty as the period at which you were to attain your majority ! How can I live during these tedious years of suspense and separation ? Have we not already been too long parted ? Come with me, sweetest ! Come, I beseech you ! ”

“ Wait, then, till the good old man consents ? ”

“ And that will be never ! Trifle no longer, dearest ! ”

“ I cannot leave Master Anthony ! I cannot abandon him in his old age ! ”

And yet how Richard managed love only knows ; but before the twilight darkened into night, the fair Rosamond was seated at his side, rowing quickly down the stream in his little boat to the lonely fisherman's hut, about a mile from

Belford, where swift horses and a trusty servant waited their arrival ; and before noon the next day the young couple were married.

The power of the court, in nothing more unscrupulously exercised than in the affairs of wardships, speedily compelled Master Anthony to place Rosamond's fortune unreservedly in the hands of her husband ; and the excellent conduct of the young man on an occasion not a little trying, the gratitude with which he acknowledged the good management of her offended guardian, and begged him to dictate his own terms as to the settlement that should be made upon her, and to name himself the proper trustees ; his deep personal respect, and earnest entreaties for the pardon and the reconciliation without which his wife's happiness would be incomplete, were such as might have mollified a harder heart than that of Master Shawe. That he continued obdurate, arose chiefly from the excess of his past fondness. In the course of his long life he had fondly loved two persons, and two only, Rosamond and her mother. The marriage of the first had fallen like a blight upon his manhood, had withered his affections, and palsied his energies in middle age ; and now that the second object of his tenderness, the charming creature whom, for her own sake, and for the remembrance of his early passion, he had loved as his own daughter, now that she had forsaken him he was conscious of a bitterness of feeling, a vexed and angry grief, that seemed to turn his blood into gall. His mind settled down into a stern and moody resentment, to which forgiveness seemed impossible.

Rosamond grieved, as an affectionate and grateful heart does grieve, over the anger of her venerable guardian ; and she grieved the more because her conscience told her that his displeasure, however excessive, was not undeserved. She that had been so repining and unthankful whilst the object of his cares and the inmate of his mansion, now thought of the good old man with an aching gratitude, a yearning tenderness, all the deeper that these feelings were wholly unavailing. It was like the fond relenting, the too-late repentance with which we so often hang over the tomb of the dead, remembering all their past affection, and feeling how little we deserved, how inadequately we acknowledged it. Stern as he was, if Master Anthony could have seen into Rosamond's bosom, as she

walked on a summer evening beneath the great lime-trees that overhung the murmuring Loddon, as it glided by her own garden at Burnham Manor, reminding her of the bright and silvery Kennet, and of the perfumed flower-garden by the High Bridge ; could he at such a moment have read her inmost thoughts, have penetrated into her most hidden feelings, angry as he was, Master Shawe would have forgiven her.

This source of regret was, however, the solitary cloud, the single shadow that passed over her happiness. Richard Tyson proved exactly the husband that she had anticipated from his conduct and character as a lover. Adversity had done for him what it had failed to do for his master, and had prepared him to enjoy his present blessings with thankfulness and moderation. Attached to the court by ties which it was impossible to break, he yet resisted the temptation of carrying his young and beautiful wife into an atmosphere of so much danger. She lived at her own paternal seat of Burnham Manor, and he spent all the time that he could spare from his official station in that pleasant retirement, the easy distance of Burnham (which lay about six or seven miles east of Belford) from London, Windsor, and Hampton Court rendering the union of his public duties and his domestic pleasures comparatively easy.

So three years glided happily away, untroubled except by an occasional thought of her poor old guardian, whose "good white head," and pale, thoughtful countenance would often rise unbidden to her memory. Three years had elapsed, and Rosamond was now the careful mother of two children ; the one a delicate girl, about fourteen months old ; the other a bold, sturdy boy, a twelvemonth older, to whom, with her husband's permission, she had given the name of Anthony. That kind husband was abroad on a mission of considerable delicacy, though of little ostensible importance, at one of the Italian courts ; and his loving wife rejoiced in his absence, rejoiced even in the probability of its duration ; for this was the summer of 1665, and the fearful pestilence, the great Plague of London, was hovering like a demon over the devoted nation.

This is not the place in which to attempt a description of those horrors, familiar to every reader through the minute and accurate narratives of Pepys and Evelyn, and the graphic

pictures of De Foe. In the depths of her tranquil seclusion, the young matron heard the distant rumours of that tremendous visitation of the devoted city; and clasping her children to her breast, blessed Heaven that they were safe in their country home, and that their dear father was far away. Had he been in England—in London, attending, as was the duty of his office, about the person of the king, how could the poor Rosamond have endured such a trial!

A day of grievous trial did arrive, although of a different nature. The panic-struck fugitives who fled from the city in hopes of shunning the disease, brought the infection with them into the country; and it was soon known in the little village of Burnham that the plague raged in Belford. The markets, they said, were deserted; the shops were closed; visitors and watchmen were appointed; the fatal cross was affixed against the infected houses; and the only sounds heard in those once busy streets were the tolling of the bell by day, and the rumbling of the dead-cart by night. London itself was not more grievously visited.

“And Master Anthony?” inquired Rosamond, as she listened with breathless horror to this fearful intelligence; “Master Anthony Shawe?”

The answer was such as she anticipated. In that deserted town Master Anthony was everywhere, succouring the sick, comforting the afflicted, relieving the poor. He alone walked the streets of that stricken city as fearlessly as if he bore a charmed life.

“Comforting and relieving others, and himself deserted and alone!” exclaimed Rosamond, bursting into a flood of tears. “God bless him! God preserve him! If he should die without forgiving me!” added she, wringing her hands with all the bitterness of a grief quickened by remorse—“If he should die without forgiving me!” And Rosamond wept as if her very heart would break.

Better hopes, however, soon arose. She knew that Master Anthony, singularly skilful in almost all disorders, had, when in the Levant, made a particular study of the fearful pestilence that was now raging about him; he had even instructed her in the symptoms, the preventives, and the treatment of a malady from which, in those days, London was seldom entirely free; and, above all, she knew him to have a confirmed belief that they who fearlessly ministered to the sick, who did their

duty with proper caution, but without dread, seldom fell victims to the disorder. Rosamond remembered how often she had heard him say that "a godly courage was the best preservative!" She remembered the words, and the assured yet reverent look with which he spake them, and she wiped away her tears and was comforted.

In the peaceful retirement of Burnham, one of the small secluded villages which lie along the course of the Loddon, remote from great roads, a pastoral valley, hidden as it were among its own rich woodlands; in this calm seclusion she and her children and her household were as safe as if the pestilence had never visited England. All her anxieties turned, therefore, towards Belford; and Reuben Spence, an old and faithful servant, who had lived with her mother before her marriage, and had known Master Anthony all his life, contrived to procure her daily tidings of his welfare.

For some time these reports were sufficiently satisfactory: he was still seen about the streets on his errands of mercy. But one evening Reuben, on his return from his usual inquiries, hesitated to appear before his lady, and, when he did attend her repeated summons, wore a face of such dismay that, struck with a sure presage of evil, Rosamond exclaimed with desperate calmness, "He is dead! I can bear it. Tell me at once. He is dead?"

Reuben hastened to assure her that she was mistaken; that Master Anthony was not dead. But in answer to her eager inquiries he was compelled to answer, that he was said to be smitten with the disorder; that the fatal sign was on the door; and that there were rumours, for the truth of which he could not take upon himself to vouch, of plunder and abandonment; that a trusted servant was said to have robbed the old man, and then deserted him; and that he who had been during this visitation the ministering angel of the town, was now left to die neglected and alone.

"Alone! but did I not leave him? Abandoned! did not I abandon him? Gracious God! direct me; and protect those poor innocents!" cried Rosamond, glancing on her children; and then ordering her palfrey to be made ready, she tore herself from the sleeping infants, wrote a brief letter to her husband, and silencing, by an unusual exertion of authority, the affectionate remonstrances of her household, who all guessed but too truly the place of her destination, set forth on

the road to Belford, accompanied by old Reuben, who in vain assured her that she was risking her life to no purpose, for that the watchman would let no one enter an infected house.

"Alas!" replied Rosamond, "did I not leave that house? I shall find no difficulty in entering."

Accordingly she directed her course through the by-lanes leading to the old ruins, and then, stopping short at the Abbey Bridge, dismissed her faithful attendant, who cried like a child on parting from his fair mistress, and following the course of the river, reached the well-known timber wharf, and scaling with some little difficulty the wall over which her own Richard had assisted her so fondly upwards of three years before, found herself once again in Master Anthony's pleasant garden.

What a desolation! what a change! It was now the middle of September, and for many weeks the overgrown herbs and flowers had been left ungathered, unwatered, untended, uncared for; so that all looked wild and withered, neglected and decayed. The foot of man, too, had been there, trampling and treading down. The genius of Destruction seemed hovering over the place. All around the house, the garden, the river, the town, was silent as death. The only sign of human habitation was one glimmering light in the upper window of a humble dwelling across the water, where some poor wretch lay, perhaps at that very moment in his last agonies. Except that one small taper, all was dark and still; not a leaf stirred in the night wind; the very air was hushed and heavy, and Nature herself seemed at pause.

Rosamond lingered a moment in the garden, awestruck with the desolation of the scene. She then applied herself to the task of gathering such aromatic herbs as were reckoned powerful against infection; for the happy wife, the tender mother, knew well the value of the life that she risked. Poor old Reuben, her faithful servant, proved that he also was conscious how precious was that life. Suspecting their destination, he had packed in a little basket such perfumes and cordials, and fragrant gums, as he thought most likely to preserve his fair mistress from the dreaded malady; and when reluctantly obeying her commands, and parting from her at the Abbey Bridge, he had put the basket into her almost unconscious hand, together with a light which he had procured at a cottage by the wayside.

Touched by the old man's affectionate care, which while gathering the herbs she had first discovered, Rosamond proceeded up the steps to her own old chamber. The door was ajar, and the state of the little apartment, its opened drawers and plundered ornaments, told too plainly that the vague account which by some indirect and untraceable channel had reached Reuben was actually true. That the trusted house-keeper had robbed her indulgent master, incited, it may be, by the cupidity of that trying hour, when every bad impulse sprang into action amidst the universal demoralisation ; that the drudges of the household had either joined her in the robbery, or had fled from the danger of contagion under the influence of a base and selfish fear ; and that her venerable guardian was abandoned, as so many others had been, to the mercy of some brutal watchman, whose only care was to examine once or twice a day whether the wretch whose door he guarded were still alive, and to report his death to the proper authorities.

All this passed through Rosamond's mind with a loathing abhorrence of the vile ingratitude which had left him who had in the early stage of the pestilence been the guardian angel of the place, to perish alone and unsuccoured. "But did not I desert him !" exclaimed she aloud in the bitterness of her heart. "Did not I abandon him ! — I, whom he loved so well !" And immediately, attracted perhaps by the sound, which proved that some person was near him, a feeble voice called faintly for "water."

With nervous haste Rosamond filled a jug and hurried to the small chamber — Master Anthony's own chamber — from whence the voice proceeded. The old man lay on the floor, dressed as if just returned from walking, his white head bare and his face nearly hidden by one arm. He still called faintly for water, and drank eagerly of the liquid as she raised that venerable head and held the jug to his lips ; then, exhausted with the effort, he sank back on the pillow that she placed for him ; and his anxious attendant proceeded to examine his countenance, and to seek on his breast and wrist for the terrible plague-spot, the fatal sign of the disorder.

No such sign was there. Again and again did Rosamond gaze, wiping away her tears, — look searchingly on that pale benevolent face, and inspect the bosom and the arm. Again

and again did she feel the feeble pulse and listen to the faint breathing ;—again and again did she wipe away her tears of joy. It was exhaustion, inanition, fatigue, weakness, age ; it was even sickness, heavy sickness—but not *the* sickness—not the plague.

Oh, how Rosamond wept and prayed, and blessed God for his mercies during that night's watching ! Her venerable patient slept calmly—slept as if he knew that one whom he loved was bending over him ; and even in sleep his amendment was perceptible,—his pulse was stronger, his breathing more free, and a gentle dew arose on his pale forehead.

As morning dawned—that dawning which in a sick room is often so very sad, but which to Rosamond seemed full of hope and life,—as morning dawned, the good old man awoke and called again for drink. Turning aside her face, she offered him a reviving cordial. He took it ; and as he gave back the cup to her trembling hand, he knew that fair and dimpled hand, and the grace of that light figure : although her face was concealed, he knew her :—“Rosamond ! It is my Rosamond !”

“Oh ! Master Anthony !—dear Master Anthony ! Blessings on you for that kind word ! It is your own Rosamond ! Forgive her !—pray forgive her !—forgive your own poor child !”

And the blessed tears of reconciliation fell fast from the eyes of both. Never had Master Anthony known so soft, so gentle, so tender a mixture of affection and gratitude. Never had Rosamond, in all the joys of virtuous love, tasted of a felicity so exquisite and so pure.

In the course of that morning, the good old Reuben, following, in spite of her prohibition, the track of his beloved mistress, made his way into Master Shawe's dwelling, accompanied by a poor widow whose son had been cured by his skill, and who came to offer her services as his attendant : and in less than a fortnight the whole party, well and happy, were assembled in the great hall of Burnham Manor ; Master Anthony with his young namesake on his knee, and Richard Tyson, returned from his embassy, dandling and tossing the lovely little girl, whom they all, especially her venerable guardian, pronounced to be the very image of his own fair Rosamond.

OLD DAVID DYKES.

ONE of my earliest recollections in Belford was of an aged and miserable-looking little man, yellow, withered, meagre and bent, who was known by every boy in the place as old David Dykes, and had been popularly distinguished by that epithet for twenty years or more. There was not so wretched an object in the town ; and his abode (for, destitute pauper as he seemed, he actually had a habitation to himself) was still more forlorn and deplorable than his personal appearance.

The hovel in which he lived was the smallest, dirtiest, dingiest, and most ruinous, of a row of dirty, dingy, ruinous houses, gradually diminishing in height and size, and running down the centre of the Butts, which at one end was divided into two narrow streets by this unsightly and unseemly wedge of tumble-down masonry. Old David's hut consisted of nothing more than one dark, gloomy little room, which served him for a shop ; a closet still smaller, behind ; and a cock-loft, to which he ascended by a ladder, and in no part of which could he stand upright, in the roof.

The shop was divided into two compartments ; one side being devoted to a paltry collection of second-hand clocks and watches, he being by trade a watchmaker, — and the other to a still more beggarly assortment of old clothes, in the purchase and disposal of which he was particularly skilful, beating, although of Christian parentage, all the Jews of the place in their own peculiar art of buying cheap and selling dear. The manner in which he would cry down some half-worn gown or faded waistcoat, offering perhaps about a twentieth of its value, and affecting the most scornful indifference as to the bargain ; the lynx-eye with which, looking up through his iron-rimmed spectacles from the clock-spring that he was engaged in cleaning, he would watch the conflict between necessity and indignation in the mind of the unfortunate vender ; and then again the way in which, half-an-hour afterwards, he would cajole the dupe with a shilling into buying at five hundred per cent. profit what he had just purchased of

the dupe without one, — might have read a lesson in the science of bargain-making to all Monmouth Street.

At such a moment there was a self-satisfied chuckle in the old wrinkled cheeks, a twinkle in the keen grey eyes which peered up through the old spectacles and the shaggy grey eyebrows, and a clutch of delight in the manner in which the long, lean, trembling fingers closed over the money, which went very far to counteract the impression produced by his wretched appearance. At the moment of a successful deal, when he had gained a little dirty pelf by cheating to right and left, first the miserable seller, then the simple purchaser — at such a moment nobody could mistake David Dykes for an object of charity. His very garments (the refuse of his shop, which even his ingenuity could not coax any one else into purchasing) assumed an air of ragged triumph ; and his old wig, the only article of luxury — that is to say, the only superfluous piece of clothing about him, — that venerable scratch on which there was hardly hair enough left to tell the colour, actually bristled up with delight. Poor for a certainty David was ; but it was poverty of mind, and not of circumstances. The man was a miser.

This fact was of course perfectly well known to all his neighbours ; and to this recognized and undeniable truth was added a strong suspicion that, in spite of his sordid traffic and apparently petty gains, David Dykes was not only a miser, but a rich miser.

He had been the son of a small farmer in the neighbourhood of Belford, and apprenticed to a watchmaker in the town ; and when, on the death of his parents, his elder brother had succeeded to the lease and stock, he, just out of his time, had employed the small portion of money which fell to his lot in purchasing and furnishing the identical shop in Middle-row, in which he had continued ever since, and being a clever workman, and abundantly humble and punctual, speedily obtained a very fair share of employment, as the general cleaner and repairer of clocks and watches for half-a-dozen miles round. To this he soon added his successful traffic in second-hand clothes and other articles ; and when it is considered that for nearly sixty years he had never been known to miss earning a penny, or to incur the most trifling unnecessary expense, it may be conceded that they who supposed him well to do in the world were probably not much out in their calculations.

His only companion was a fierce and faithful mastiff dog, one of dear Margaret Lane's army of pensioners. David had begged Tiger of her husband when a puppy; and Stephen, then a young man, and always good-natured and unwilling to refuse a neighbour, bestowed the high-blooded animal upon him with such stipulations as to care and food, as evinced his perfect knowledge of the watchmaker's character. "Mind," said Stephen, "that you feed that pup well. Don't think to starve him as you do yourself, for he's been used to good keep, and so have his father and mother before him; and if you've got a notion in your head of his being able to live as you live, upon a potato a day, why I give you fair warning that he won't stand it. Feed him properly, and he'll be a faithful friend, and take care of your shop and your money: but no starvation!" And David promised, intending perhaps to keep his word. But his notions of good feed were so different from Tiger's that Stephen's misgivings were completely realised. The poor puppy, haggard and empty, found his way to his old master's yard, and catching sight of Mrs. Lane, crept towards her and crouched down at her feet, looking so piteously in her face, and licking the hand with which she patted his rough honest head so imploringly, that Margaret, who never could bear to see any sort of creature in any distress that she could relieve, immediately fetched him a dinner, and stood by whilst he ate it; and, somehow or other, a tacit compact ensued between her and Tiger, that he should live with David Dykes — who, except in the matter of starving, was a kind master, — and come every day to her to be fed. And so it was settled, to the general satisfaction of all parties.

Tiger therefore continued the watchmaker's companion — his only companion; for although he once, in a fit of most unusual self-indulgence, contemplated taking an old woman as his housekeeper, to attend the shop when he went clock-cleaning into the country; light his fire during the very small portion of the year that he allowed himself such a luxury; make his bed — such as it was; cook his dinner — when he had one; and perform for him those offices wherein he had been accustomed to "minister to himself;" — and although he actually went so far as to hire a poor woman of approved honesty in that capacity upon very satisfactory terms, — that is to say, for her board and a certain portion of old clothes, and no wages, — yet her notions upon the subject of diet bearing a

greater resemblance to Tiger's than her master's and she having unluckily no Margaret Lane to resort to, she took herself off at the end of eight-and-forty hours, and sought refuge in the work-house of St. Nicholas, the strictest in the town, as an actual land of plenty in comparison with the watchmaker's dwelling.

David, who, starved as she called herself, had thought her the greatest glutton in existence, and begrudged her every morsel that she put into her mouth — was glad enough of the riddance. Old as he was, his habits were too lonely and unsocial, too peculiar and too independent of the services of others, to find any comfort in attendance and company. To save half an inch of candle by going to bed in the dark, and a quarter of a pound of soap by washing his own linen without that usual companion of the wash-tub ; to borrow a needle and beg a bit of thread, and mend with his own hands his own stockings or his own shirt ; to sew on the knees of his inexpressibles a button totally unlike the rest, — a metal button, for instance, when the others were bone, — or a bit of olive-coloured tape, when the companion-piece had once been drab ; to patch his old brown coat with a bit of old black cloth ; to clout his old shoes with a piece of leather picked up in the streets ; — to save money, in short, by any of those contrivances and devices which the world calls most sordid, had to him an inexpressible savour. There was a chuckle of ineffable satisfaction when he had by such means avoided the expenditure of twopence ; which proves that avarice has its pleasures, high in degree, although low in kind. His delight in making a good bargain was of the same nature, and perhaps more exquisite, since the pride of successful cunning was added to the gratification of accumulation. A rise in the Three per Cents. was a less positive delight, since it was dashed with a considerable portion of anxiety ; for if Consols rose one day, they might fall the next. But the joy of all joys, the triumph of all triumphs, was on his half-yearly journeys to London, accomplished partly on foot, partly by a cast in a cart or wagon bestowed on him for charity, and partly by a sixpenny ride on the outside of a coach. Then, when first receiving and then buying in his dividends, and looking on his bank-receipts (those little bits of paper which replace so shabbily the tangible riches — the gold and precious stones which gave such

gorgeousness to the delights of avarice, as represented in the old poets,) — then he felt, in its fullest extent, the highest ecstasy of which a miser is capable.

From the amount of these accumulations, successful speculations in loans or the money-market must have aided his scrapings and savings. Meeting him at the Bank, Stephen Lane became accidentally acquainted with the amount, and remonstrated with his usual good-humoured frankness on his not allowing himself the comforts he could so well afford. “Wait,” replied David, “till it mounts to another plum, and then!” — Wait! and he was already turned of eighty!

For whom this fortune was destined, the owner himself would have found it difficult to say. His brother had long been dead, and his brother’s son. The only survivor of the family was his grandnephew and namesake, a young David Dykes, who left the paternal farm and set up a showy haberdasher’s shop in Belford. A showy young man he was himself; bold, speculating, adventurous, plausible; with a surface of good humour and a substratum of selfishness.

“He’ll turn out a spendthrift,” observed one day David the elder to our friend Stephen Lane.

“Or a miser,” replied the butcher, doubtingly.

“We shall see,” rejoined David, “whether he’ll take up the 20*l.* bill I cashed for him, — the first bill I ever cashed for anybody.”

And as the grandnephew did not take up the bill, the granduncle, provoked at having been, for the first time in his life, overreached, instantly arrested him; and other creditors pouring in, he was confined in Belford gaol, with no other chance of release than the Insolvent Act and the clinging consciousness of having irreparably offended his old relation.

Our miser, on his part, thought of nothing so much as of replacing the twenty pounds; redoubling for this purpose his industry, his abstemiousness, and his savings of every sort. It was a hard winter; but he allowed himself neither fire nor candle, nor meat, nor beer, living as Tiger and the housekeeper had refused to live, on water and potatoes. Accordingly, on one frosty morning, the watchmaker was missed in his accustomed haunts — the shop was unopened — Tiger was heard howling within the house, and on breaking open the door the poor old man was found dead in his miserable bed.

No will could be discovered; and the kinsman whom he

had caused to be arrested, the only person whom (thoroughly harmless and kindly in his general feeling) he had perhaps ever disliked in his life, came in as heir-at-law for his immense fortune and all his possessions,—except our friend Tiger, who wisely betook himself to his old refuge, the butcher's yard, and his old protectress, Margaret Lane.

David Dykes the younger realised his granduncle's predictions by getting through his fortune with incredible despatch; assisted in that meritorious purpose by every pursuit that ever has been devised for speeding a traveller on the Road to Ruin, and aided by the very worst company in town and country. Horses, hounds, carriages, the gaming-table, and the turf, had each a share in his undoing; and the consummation was at last reserved for a contested election, which he lost on the same day that his principal gambling companion ran away with a French opera-dancer, who had condescended to reside in his house, to wear his jewels, and to spend his money.

Timon of Athens had never more cause to turn misanthrope; but misanthropy was too noble a disease to run in the Dykes' blood—their turn was different.

No sooner was our prodigal completely ruined, than he vindicated Stephen Lane's knowledge of character; for, having spent and sold everything except the hovel in which the money was accumulated, and which in his prosperity had been overlooked as too mean an object for the hammer of the auctioneer, he came back to Belford, like the Heir of Lynne to his ruined Grange, established himself in that identical old-clothes-shop, and found there, not indeed a hoard of gold, not a second ready-made fortune, but the power of amassing one by thrift and industry.

There he may be seen any day, buying, selling and bartering, in much such a patched suit as his uncle's, wigged and spectacled like him,—I won't answer for the identity of the wig, but the spectacles must have been the very same pair which formerly adorned the nose of the original David,—just as saving, as scraping, as humble, as industrious, and, to sum up all, as miserly as his predecessor; looking as lean, as shrivelled, as care-worn, as crouching, and very nearly as old; and not at all unlikely—provided he also, as your human anatomies so often do, should wither on to the age of fourscore,—by no means unlikely to accumulate a plum or two in his own proper person.

THE DISSENTING MINISTER.

"No, Victor! we shall never meet again. I feel that conviction burnt in upon my very heart. We part now for the last time. You are returning to your own beautiful France, to your family, your home: a captive released from his prison, an exile restored to his country, gay, fortunate, and happy — what leisure will you have to think of the poor Jane?"

"You forget, Jane, that I am the soldier of a chief at war with all Europe, and that, in leaving England, I shall be sent instantly to fight fresh battles against some other nation. It is my only consolation that the conditions of my exchange forbid my being again opposed to your countrymen. I go, dearest, not to encounter the temptations of peace, but the hardships of war."

"The heroic hardships, the exciting dangers that you love so well! Be it so. Battle, victory, peril, or death, on the one hand; — on the other, the graces and the blandishments, the talents and the beauty of your lovely countrywomen! What chance is there that I should be remembered either in the turmoil of a campaign, or the gaiety of a capital? You will think of me (if indeed you should ever think of me at all) but as a part of the gloomiest scenes and the most cloudy days of your existence. As Belford contrasted with Paris, so shall I seem when placed in competition with some fair Parisian. No, Victor! we part, and I feel that we part for ever!"

"Cruel and unjust! Shall *you* forget *me*?"

"No! To remember when hope is gone, is the melancholy privilege of woman. Forget you! Oh that I could!"

"Well then, Jane, my own Jane, put an end at once to these doubts, to these suspicions. Come with me to France, to my home. My mother is not rich; — I am one of Napoleon's poorest captains; but he has deigned to notice me; — my promotion, if life be spared to me, is assured; and, in the mean time, we have enough for competence, for happiness. Come with me, my own Jane — you whose affection has been my only comfort during two years of captivity, come and share the joys of my release! Nothing can be easier

than your flight. No one suspects our attachment. Your father sleeps——”

“And you would have me abandon him! me, his only child! Alas! Victor, if I were to desert him in his old age, could I ever sleep again? Go! I am rightly punished for a love which, prejudiced as he is against your nation, I knew that he would condemn. It is fit that a clandestine attachment should end in desolation and misery. Go! but oh, dearest, talk no more of my accompanying you; say no more that you will return to claim me at the peace: both are alike impossible. Go, and be happy with some younger, fairer woman! Go, and forget the poor Jane!” And so saying, she gently disengaged her hand, which was clasped in both his, and passed quickly from the little garden where they stood into the house, where, for fear of discovery, Victor dared not follow her.

This dialogue, which, by the way, was held not as I have given it, in English, but in rapid and passionate French, took place, at the close of a November evening in the autumn of 1808, between a young officer of the Imperial Army, on parole in Belford, and Jane Lanham, the only daughter, the only surviving child, of old John Lanham, a corn-chandler in the town.

Victor d'Auberval, the officer in question, was a young man of good education, considerable talent, and a lively and ardent character. He had been sent, as a favour, to Belford, together with four or five naval officers, with whom our *jeune militaire* had little in common besides his country and his misfortunes; and although incomparably better off than those of his *compatriotes* at Norman Cross and elsewhere, who solaced their leisure and relieved their necessities by cutting dominoes and other knick-knacks out of bone, and ornamenting baskets and boxes with flowers and landscapes composed of coloured straw, yet, being wholly unnoticed by the inhabitants of the town, and obliged, from the difficulty of obtaining remittances, to practise occasionally a very severe economy, he would certainly have become a victim to the English malady with a French name, styled *ennui*, had he not been preserved from that calamity by falling into the disease of all climates, called love.

Judging merely from outward circumstances, no one would

seem less likely to captivate the handsome and brilliant Frenchman than Jane Lanham. Full four or five-and-twenty, and looking still older,—of a common height, common size, and, but for her beautiful dark eyes, common features,—her person, attired, as it always was, with perfect plainness and simplicity, had nothing to attract observation; and her station, as the daughter of a man in trade, himself a rigid dissenter, and living in frugal retirement, rendered their meeting at all anything but probable. And she, grave, orderly, staid, demure,—she that eschewed pink ribbons as if she had been a female Friend, and would have thought it some sin to wear a bow of any hue in her straw bonnet,—who would ever have dreamt of Jane Lanham's being smitten with a tri-coloured cockade?

So the matter fell out.

John Lanham was, as we have said, a corn-chandler in Belford, and one who, in spite of his living in a small gloomy house, in a dark narrow lane leading from one great street to another, with no larger establishment than one maid of all work and a lad to take care of his horse and chaise, was yet reputed to possess considerable wealth. He was a dissenter of a sect rigid and respectable rather than numerous, and it was quoted in proof of his opulence, that, in rebuilding the chapel which he attended, he had himself contributed the magnificent sum of three thousand pounds. He had lost several children in their infancy, and his wife had died in bringing Jane into the world; so that the father, grave, stern, and severe to others, was yet bound by the tenderest of all ties, that of her entire helplessness and dependence, to his motherless girl, and spared nothing that, under his peculiar views of the world, could conduce to her happiness and well-being.

His chief adviser and assistant in the little girl's education was his old friend Mr. Fenton, the minister of the congregation to which he belonged,—a man shrewd, upright, conscientious, and learned, but unfitted for his present post by two very important disqualifications: first, as an old bachelor who knew no more of the bringing up of children than of the training of race-horses; secondly, as having a complete and thorough contempt for the sex, whom he considered as so many animated dolls, or ornamented monkeys, frivolous and

mischievous, and capable of nothing better than the fulfilment of the lowest household duties. "Teach her to read and to write," quoth Mr. Fenton, "to keep accounts, to cut out a shirt, to mend stockings, to make a pudding, and to stay within doors, and you will have done your duty."

According to this scale Jane's education seemed likely to be conducted, when a short visit from her mother's sister, just as she had entered her thirteenth year, made a slight addition to her studies. Her aunt, a sensible and cultivated woman, assuming that the young person who was being brought up with ideas so limited was likely to inherit considerable property, would fain have converted Mr. Lanham to her own more enlarged and liberal views, have sent her to a good school, or have engaged an accomplished governess; but this attempt ended in a dispute that produced a total estrangement between the parties, and the only fruit of her remonstrances was the attendance of the good Abbé Villaret as a French master, — the study of French being, in the eyes both of Mr. Lanham and Mr. Fenton, a considerably less abomination than that of music, drawing, and dancing. "She'll make nothing of it," thought Mr. Fenton; "I myself did not, though I was at the expense of a grammar and a dictionary, and worked at it an hour a day for a month. She'll make nothing of it, so she may as well try as not." And the abbé was sent for, and the lessons begun.

This was a new era in the life of Jane Lanham. L'Abbé Villaret soon discovered, through the veil of shyness, awkwardness, ignorance, and modesty, the great powers of his pupil. The difficulties of the language disappeared as by magic, and she whose English reading had been restricted to the commonest elementary books, with a few volumes of sectarian devotion, and "Watts's Hymns," (for poetry she had never known, except the magnificent poetry of the Scriptures, and the homely but heart-stirring imaginations of the "Pilgrim's Progress"), was now eagerly devouring the choicest and purest *morceaux* of French literature. Mr. Fenton having interdicted to the abbé the use of any works likely to convert the young Protestant to the Catholic faith, and Mr. Lanham (who had never read one in his life) having added a caution against novels, Jane and her kind instructor were left in other respects free: her father, who passed almost every day in the

pursuit of his business in the neighbouring towns, and his pastor, who only visited him in an evening, having no suspicion of the many, many hours which she devoted to the new-born delight of poring over books; and the abbé knew so well how to buy books cheaply, and Mr. Lanham gave him money for her use with so little inquiry as to its destination, that she soon accumulated a very respectable French library.

What a new world for the young recluse! — Racine, Corneille, Crébillon, the tragedies and histories of Voltaire, the picturesque revolutions of Vertôt, the enchanting letters of Madame de Sévigné, the Causes Célèbres (more interesting than any novels), the Mémoires de Sully (most striking and most *naïf* of histories), Télémaque, the Young Anacharsis, the purest comedies of Molière and Regnard, the Fables de La Fontaine, the poems of Delille and of Boileau, the Vert-vert of Gresset, Le Père Brumoy's Théâtre des Grecs, Madame Dacier's Homer, — these, and a hundred books like these, burst as a freshly-acquired sense upon the shy yet ardent girl. It was like the recovery of sight to one become blind in infancy; and the kindness of the abbé, who delighted in answering her inquiries and directing her taste, increased a thousand-fold the profit and the pleasure which she derived from her favourite authors.

Excepting her good old instructor, she had no confidant. Certain that they would feel no sympathy in her gratification, she never spoke of her books either to her father or Mr. Fenton; and they, satisfied with M. l'Abbé's calm report of her attention to his lessons, made no further inquiries. Her French studies were, she felt, for herself, and herself alone; and when his tragical death deprived her of the friend and tutor whom she had so entirely loved and respected, reading became more and more a solitary pleasure. Outwardly calm, silent, and retiring, — an affectionate daughter, an excellent housewife, and an attentive hostess, — she was Mr. Fenton's *beau idéal* of a young woman. Little did he suspect the glowing, enthusiastic, and concentrated character that lurked under that cold exterior — the fire that was hidden under that white and virgin snow. Purer than she really was he could not fancy her; but never would he have divined how much of tenderness and firmness was mingled with that youthful purity, or how

completely he had himself, by a life of restraint and seclusion, prepared her mind to yield to an engrossing and lasting passion.

Amongst her beloved French books, those which she preferred were undoubtedly the tragedies, the only dramas which had ever fallen in her way, and which exercised over her imagination the full power of that most striking and delightful of any species of literature. We who know Shakspeare, — who have known him from our childhood, and are, as is were, “to *his* manner born,” — feel at once that, compared with that greatest of poets, the “belles tirades” of Racine and of Corneille are cold, and false, and wearisome; but to one who had no such standard by which to measure the tragic dramatists of France, the mysterious and thrilling horrors of the old Greek stories which their tragedies so frequently embodied, — the woes of Thebes, the fated line of Pelops, the passion of Phædra, and the desolation of Antigone, — were full of a strange and fearful power. Nor was the spell confined to the classical plays. The “Tragédies Chrétiennes” — Esther and Athalie — Polyeucte and Alzire — excited at least equal interest; while the contest between love and “la force du sang,” in The Cid, and Zaïre, struck upon her with all the power of a predestined sympathy. She felt that she herself was born to such a trial; and the presentiment was perhaps, as so often happens, in no small degree the cause of its own accomplishment.

The accident by which she became acquainted with Victor d’Auberval may be told in a very few words.

The nurse who had taken to her on the death of her mother, and who still retained for her the strong affection so often inspired by foster children, was the wife of a respectable publican in Queen Street; and being of excellent private character, and one of Mr. Fenton’s congregation, was admitted to see Jane whenever she liked, in a somewhat equivocal capacity between a visitor and dependant.

One evening she came in great haste to say that a Bristol coach which inned at the Red Lion had just dropped there two foreigners, a man and a woman, one of whom seemed to her fancy dying, whilst both appeared miserably poor, and neither could speak a word to be understood. Would her dear child come and interpret for the sick lady?

Jane went immediately. They were Italian musicians, on their way to Bristol, where they hoped to meet a friend and to procure employment. In the meanwhile, the illness of the wife had stopped them on their journey; and their slender funds were, as the husband modestly confessed, little calculated to encounter the expenses of medical assistance and an English inn.

Jane promised to represent the matter to her father, who, although hating Frenchmen and papists (both of which he assumed the foreigners to be) with a hatred eminently British and protestant, was yet too good a Christian to refuse moderate relief to fellow-creatures in distress; and between Mr. Lanham's contributions and the good landlady's kindness, and what Jane could spare from her own frugally-supplied purse, the poor Italians (for they were singers from Florence) were enabled to bear up during a detention of many days.

Before they resumed their journey, their kind interpreter had heard from the good hostess that they had found another friend, almost as poor as themselves, and previously unacquainted with them, in a French officer on parole in the town, to whom the simple fact of their being foreigners in distress in a strange land had supplied the place of recommendation or introduction; and when going the next day, laden with a few comforts for the invalide, to bid them farewell and to see them off, she met, for the first time, the young officer, who had been drawn by similar feelings to the door of the Red Lion.

It was a bitter December day — one of those north-east winds which seem to blow through you, and which hardly any strength can stand; and as the poor Italian, in a thin summer waistcoat and a threadbare coat, took his seat on the top of the coach, shivering from head to foot, and his teeth already chattering, amidst the sneers of the bear-skinned coachman, muffled up to his ears, and his warmly-clad fellow-passengers, Victor took off his own great-coat, tossed it smilingly to the freezing musician, and walked rapidly away as the coach drove off, uttering an exclamation somewhat similar to Sir Philip Sidney's at Zutphen — "He wants it more than I do." *

My friend Mr. Serle has said, in one of the finest plays of

* St. Martin was canonized for an act altogether similar to that of Victor d'Auberval.

this century, — richer in great plays, let the critics rail as they will, than any age since the time of Elizabeth and her immediate successor ; — Mr. Serle, speaking of the master-passion, has said, in “ The Merchant of London,”

“ How many doors or entrances hath love
Into the heart ? —
As many as the senses :
All are love’s portals ; though, when the proudest comes,
He comes as conqueror’s use, by his own path —
And sympathy’s that breach.”

And this single instance of sympathy and fellow-feeling (for the grateful Italians had spoken of Miss Lanham’s kindness to M. d’Auberval) sealed the destiny of two warm hearts.

Victor soon contrived to get introduced to Jane, by their mutual friend, the landlady of the Red Lion ; and, after that introduction, he managed to meet her accidentally whenever there was no danger of interruption or discovery ; which, as Jane had always been in the habit of taking long, solitary walks, happened, it must be confessed, pretty often. He was charmed at the piquant contrast between her shy, retiring manners, and her ardent and enthusiastic character ; and his national vanity found a high gratification in her proficiency in, and fondness for, his language and literature ; whilst she (so full of contradictions is love) found no less attraction in his ignorance of English. She liked to have something to teach her quick and lively pupil ; and he repaid her instructions by enlarging her knowledge of French authors, — by introducing to her the beautiful though dangerous pages of Rousseau, the light and brilliant writers of memoirs, and the higher devotional eloquence of Bossuet, Massillon, and Bourdaloue, — the *Lettres Spirituelles* of Fénelon, and the equally beautiful, though very different, works of Le Père Pascal.

So time wore on. The declaration of love had been made by one party ; and the confession that that love was returned had been reluctantly extorted from the other. Of what use was that confession ? Never, as Jane declared, would she marry to displease her father ; — and how, knowing as she well did all his prejudices, could she hope for his consent to a union with a prisoner, a soldier, a Frenchman, a Catholic ? Even Victor felt the impossibility.

Still neither could forego the troubled happiness of these stolen interviews, chequered as they were with present alarms

and future fears. Jane had no confidant. The reserve and perhaps the pride of her character prevented her confessing even to her affectionate nurse a clandestine attachment. But she half feared that her secret was suspected at least, if not wholly known, by Mr. Fenton; and if known to him, assuredly it would be disclosed to her father; and the manner in which a worthy, wealthy, and disagreeable London suitor was pressed on her by both (for hitherto Mr. Lanham had seemed averse to her marrying), confirmed her in the apprehension.

Still, however, they continued to meet, until suddenly, and without any warning, the exchange that restored him to his country, and tore him from her who had been his consolation in captivity, burst on them like a thunderclap; and then Jane, with all the inconsistency of a woman's heart, forgot her own vows never to marry him without the consent of her father, — forgot how impossible it appeared that that consent should ever be obtained, and dwelt wholly on the fear of his inconstancy — on the chance of his meeting some fair, and young, and fascinating Frenchwoman, and forgetting his own Jane; whilst he again and again pledged himself, when peace should come, to return to Belford and carry home in triumph the only woman he could ever love. Until that happy day, they agreed, in the absence of any safe medium of communication, that it would be better not to write; and so, in the midst of despondency on the one side, and ardent and sincere protestations on the other, they parted.

Who shall describe Jane's desolation during the long and dreary winter that succeeded their separation? That her secret was known, or at least strongly suspected, appeared to her certain; and she more than guessed that her father's forbearance in not putting into words the grieved displeasure which he evidently felt, was owing to the kind but crabbed old bachelor Mr. Fenton, whose conduct towards herself — or rather, whose opinion of her powers, appeared to have undergone a considerable change, and who, giving her credit for strength of mind, seemed chiefly bent on spurring her on to exert that strength to the utmost. He gave proof of that knowledge of human nature which the dissenting ministers so frequently possess, by seeking to turn her thoughts into a different channel; and by bringing her Milton and Cowper, and supplying her with English books of history and theology,

together with the lives of many pious and eminent men of his own persuasion, succeeded not only in leading her into an interesting and profitable course of reading, but in beguiling her into an unexpected frankness of discussion on the subject of her new studies.

In these discussions, he soon found the talent of the young person whom he had so long undervalued; and constant to his contempt for the sex (a heresy from which a man who has fallen into it seldom recovers), began to consider her as a splendid exception to the general inanity of woman; a good opinion which received further confirmation from her devoted attention to her father, who was seized with a lingering illness about a twelvemonth after the departure of Victor, of which he finally died, after languishing for nearly two years, kept alive only by the tender and incessant cares of his daughter, and the sympathizing visits of his friend.

On opening the will, his beloved daughter, Jane, was found sole heiress to a fortune of 70,000*l.*;—unless she should intermarry with a soldier, a papist, or a foreigner, in which case the entire property was bequeathed unreservedly to the Rev. Samuel Fenton, to be disposed of by him according to his sole will and pleasure.

Miss Lanham was less affected by this clause than might have been expected. Three years had now elapsed from the period of separation; and she had been so well obeyed, as never to have received one line from Victor d'Auberval. She feared that he was dead; she tried to hope that he was unfaithful; and the tremendous number of officers that had fallen in Napoleon's last battles, rendered the former by far the more probable catastrophe:—even if he had not previously fallen, the Russian campaign threatened extermination to the French army; and poor Jane, in whose bosom hope had long lain dormant, hardly regarded this fresh obstacle to her unhappy love. She felt that hers was a widowed heart, and that her future comfort must be sought in the calm pleasures of literature, and in contributing all that she could to the happiness of others.

Attached to Belford by long habit, and by the recollection of past happiness and past sorrows, she continued in her old dwelling, making little other alteration in her way of life, than that of adding two or three servants to her establishment,

and offering a home to her mother's sister—the aunt to whose intervention she owed the doubtful good of that proficiency in French which had introduced her to Victor, and whom unforeseen events had now reduced to absolute poverty.

In her she found an intelligent and cultivated companion; and in her society and that of Mr. Fenton, and in the delight of a daily increasing library, her days passed calmly and pleasantly; when, in spite of all her resolutions, her serenity was disturbed by the victories of the allies, the fall of Napoleon, the capture of Paris, and the peace of Europe. Was Victor dead or alive,—faithless or constant? Would he seek her? and seeking her, what would be his disappointment at the clause that parted them for ever? Ought she to remain in Belford? Was there no way of ascertaining his fate?

She was revolving these questions for the hundredth time, when a knock was heard at the door, and the servant announced Colonel d'Auberval.

There is no describing such meetings. After sketching rapidly his fortunes since they parted; how he had disobeyed her by writing, and how he had since found that his letters had miscarried; and after brief assurances that in his eyes she was more than ever charming, had gained added grace, expression, and intelligence,—Jane began to communicate to him, at first with much agitation, afterwards with collected calmness, the clause in the will by which she forfeited all her property in marrying him.

“Is it not cruel,” added she, “to have lost the power of enriching him whom I love?”

“You do love me, then, still?” exclaimed Victor. “Blessings on you for that word! You are still constant?”

“Constant! Oh, if you could have seen my heart during these long, long years! If you could have imagined how the thought of you mingled with every recollection, every feeling, every hope! But to bring you a penniless wife, Victor—for even the interest of this money since my father's death, which might have been a little portion, I have settled upon my poor aunt; to take advantage of your generosity, and burthen you with a dowerless wife,—never handsome, no longer young, inferior to you in every way,—ought I to do so? Would it be just? would it be right? Answer me, Victor.”

“Rather tell me, would it be just and right to deprive *you* of the splendid fortune you would use so well? Would you, for my sake, for love and for competence, forego the wealth which is your own?”

“Would I? Oh, how can you ask!”

“Will you, then, my own Jane? Say yes, dearest, and never will we think of this money again. I have a mother worthy to be yours — a mother who will love and value you as you deserve to be loved; and an estate with a small château at the foot of the Pyrenees, beautiful enough to make an emperor forget his throne. Share it with me, and we shall be happier in that peaceful retirement than ever monarch was or can be! You love the country. You have lost none of the simplicity which belonged to you, alike from taste and from habit. You will not miss these riches?”

“Oh, no! no!”

“And you will be mine, dearest and faithfulest? Mine, heart and hand? Say yes, mine own Jane!”

And Jane did whisper, between smiles and tears, that “yes,” which her faithful lover was never weary of hearing; and in a shorter time than it takes to tell it, all the details of the marriage were settled.

In the evening, Mr. Fenton, whom Miss Lanham had invited to tea, arrived; and in a few simple words, Jane introduced Colonel d'Auberval, explained their mutual situation, and declared her resolution of relinquishing immediately the fortune which, by her father's will, would be triply forfeited by her union with a soldier, a foreigner, and a Catholic.

“And your religion?” inquired Mr. Fenton, somewhat sternly.

“Shall ever be sacred in my eyes,” replied Victor, solemnly. “My own excellent mother is herself a Protestant and a Calvinist. There is a clergyman of that persuasion at Bayonne. She shall find every facility for the exercise of her own mode of worship. I should love her less, if I thought her capable of change.”

“Well, but this money: — Are you sure, young man, that you yourself will not regret marrying a portionless wife?”

“Quite sure. I knew nothing of her fortune. It was a portionless wife that I came hither to seek.”

“And you, Jane? Can you abandon this wealth, which, properly used, comprises in itself the blessed power of doing good, of relieving misery, of conferring happiness? Can you leave your home, your country, and your friends?”

“Oh, Mr. Fenton!” replied Jane, “I shall regret none but you. His home will be my home, his country my country. My dear aunt will, I hope, accompany us; I shall leave nothing that I love but you, my second father. And for this fortune, which, used as it should be used, is indeed a blessing — do I not leave it in *your* hands? And am I not sure that with you it will be a fund for relieving misery and conferring happiness? I feel that if, at this moment, he whom I have lost could see into my heart, he would approve my resolution, and would bless the man who had shown such disinterested affection for his child.”

“In his name and my own, I bless you, my children,” rejoined Mr. Fenton; “and as his act and my own do I restore to you the forfeited money. No refusals, young man! — no arguments! no thanks! It is yours, and yours only. Listen to me, Jane. This will, for which any one less generous and disinterested than yourself would have hated me, was made, as you must have suspected, under my direction. I had known from your friend, the hostess of the Red Lion, of your mutual attachment; and was on the point of putting a stop to your interviews, when an exchange, unexpected by all parties, removed M. d’Auberval from Belford. After your separation, it would have been inflicting needless misery to have reproached you with an intercourse which we had every reason to believe completely at an end. I prevailed on my good friend to conceal his knowledge of the engagement, and tried all I could to turn your thoughts into a different channel. By these means I became gradually acquainted with your firmness and strength of mind, your ardour and your sensibility; and having made minute and searching inquiries into the character of your lover, I began to think, little as an old bachelor is supposed to know of those matters, that an attachment between two such persons was likely to be an attachment for life; and I prevailed on Mr. Lanham to add to his will the clause that you have seen, that we might prove the disinterestedness as well as the constancy of the lovers. Both are proved,” continued the good old man, a smile of the

purest benevolence softening his rugged features, "both are proved to my entire satisfaction; and soldier, Frenchman, and Papist though he be, the sooner I join your hands and get quit of this money, the better. Not a word, my dear Jane, unless to fix the day. Surely you are not going to compliment me for doing my duty! I don't know how I shall part with her, though, well as you deserve her," continued he, turning to Colonel d'Auberval; "you must bring her sometimes to Belford." And, passing the back of his withered hand across his eyes to brush off the unusual softness, the good dissenting minister walked out of the room.

BELFORD RACES.

BELFORD RACES,—*The Races*, as the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood were pleased to call them, as if they had been the races *par excellence* of the kingdom, surpassing Epsom, and Ascot, and Doncaster, and Newmarket, instead of being the most trumpery meeting that ever brought horses to run for a plate—are, I am happy to say, a non-existing nuisance. The only good that I ever knew done by an enclosure act was the putting an end to that iniquity.

Generally speaking, enclosures seem to me lamentable things. They steal away from the landscape the patches of woodland, the shady nooks and tangled dingles, the wild heathy banks and primrosy dells, the steep ravines and deep irregular pools,—all, in short, that the artist loves to paint and the poet to fancy,—all that comes into our thoughts when we talk of the country; and they give us, instead, hedge-rows without a tree, fields cut into geometrical lines, and Macadamized roads, which, although as straight and as ugly as the most thorough-going utilitarian can desire, do yet contrive to be more inconvenient and farther about than the picturesque by-ways of the elder time. Moreover, let political philosophy preach as it will, an enclosure bill is a positive evil to the poor. They lose by it the turf and furze for their fuel,—the odd nooks adjoining their cottages, which they sometimes begged from the lord of the manor; and sometimes, it must be confessed,

took without that preliminary courtesy (I wish all thefts were as innocent), to cultivate for a garden ; whilst the advantage of a village green to their little stock of pigs and poultry was incalculable. But all this is beside my purpose. However, according to the well-known epigram, " to steal a common from a goose " may be an evil, to steal a common from the races must be a good ; and when the enclosure of Belford Heath put an end to that wearisome annual festivity, I believe verily that there were not twenty people about the place who did not rejoice in the loss of those dullest of all dull gaieties.

Even the great races are tiresome things : they last so long, and of the amusement, such as it is, you see so little. Moreover, the weather is never good : it is sure to be dusty, or showery, or windy, or sunny ; sometimes it is too hot, generally it is too cold ; — I never knew it right in my life. Then, although the crowd is such that it seems as if all the world were on the ground, you are quite sure never to meet the person you want to see, and have very often the provoking mortification of finding, by one of those accidents which at races always happen, that you have missed each other by five minutes. The vaunted company is nothing compared with the Zoological Gardens on a Sunday. You lose your party — you have to wait for your servants — you lame your horses — you scratch your carriage — you spoil your new bonnet — you tear your best pelisse — you come back tired, and hungry, and cross — you catch a cold or a fever ; and your only compensation for all these evils is, that you have the power of saying to some neighbour wise enough to stay at home, — " I have been to the races ! "

These calamities, however, belong to the grand meetings, where horses of name and fame, ridden by jockeys of equal renown, run for the Derby, the Oaks, or the St. Leger ; where ladies win French gloves and gentlemen lose English estates ; where you are at all events sure of a crowd, and pretty sure of a crowd of beauty and fashion ; where, if your pocket be picked, it is ten to one but a lord is equally unlucky ; and if you get drenched by a shower, you have the comfort of seeing a countess in the same condition.

Our Belford afflictions were of a different sort. The Heath, which, contrary to the general picturesqueness of commons, was a dull, flat, low, unprofitable piece of ground, wholly un-

interesting in itself, and commanding no view of any sort, had been my aversion as long as I could remember; having been for many years the scene of those reviews of volunteers and yeomanry, presentations of colours, and so forth, which formed the delight of his majesty's noise-loving subjects, and were to me, "who hated the sound of a gun like a hurt wild duck," the objects of mingled dread and detestation,—the more especially as, besides its being in those days reckoned a point of loyalty not to miss such exhibitions, people used to inculcate it as a duty to take me amongst guns, and drums, and trumpets, by way of curing my cowardice. Once I had the pleasure of baffling their good intentions. It was a fine day in the midsummer holidays, and my dear mother taking a young lady with her in the carriage, I rode with my father in the gig, he having been tormented by some sage adviser into taking me into the field, and thinking that the most palatable manner; and I so ordered matters by mere dint of coaxing, that happening to be early on the ground, I prevailed on my near companion to turn back, and drive me home again before the arrival of the reviewing general; thus escaping the shock of the salute after the fashion of the patient who, being ordered to take a shower-bath, jumped out before pulling the string.

Well, this ugly piece of ground numbered amongst its demerits that of being the worst race-course in England. Flat as it looked, it was found on examination to be full of inequalities, going up hill and down hill just in the very parts where, for certain reasons which I do not pretend to understand, (all my knowledge of the turf being gathered from the early part of Holcroft's Memoirs, one of the most amusing pieces of autobiography in the language,) it ought to have been as level as a railroad. Then, for as dry as it seemed—a dull expanse of dwarf furze and withered heath, there were half-a-dozen places so incurably boggy, that once in a sham fight at a review half a company of the Belford volunteer legion sunk knee-deep, to their own inexpressible consternation, the total derangement of the order of battle, and the utter ruin of their white spatterdashes: and in order to avoid these marshy spots, certain awkward bends occurred in the course, which made as great demands on the skill of the jockeys as the sticking fast of his troops had done on the tactics of the reviewing general. In a word, as a race-course Belford Heath was so detestable,

that a race-horse of any reputation would have been ashamed to show his face there.

Then the only circumstance that could have reconciled the owners of good horses to a bad course — high stakes and large subscriptions — were totally wanting. There was, to be sure, a county member's plate and a town member's plate, and the Belford stakes and the hunt stakes ; and a popular high sheriff, or a candidate for the borough or the county, who had a mind to be popular,—or some Londoner, freshly imported, who thought supporting the races a part of his new duties as a country gentleman, — would get up something like a subscription : but nothing could be less tempting than the rewards held out to the winners, and but for the speculations of certain horse-dealers, who reckoned on its being advantageous to the sale of a horse to have won a plate even at Belford, the races would undoubtedly have fallen to the ground from the mere absence of racers.

As it was, they languished on from year to year, every season worse than the last, with no company except the families of the neighbourhood, no sporting characters, no gentlemen of the turf, no betting stand, no blacklegs, no thimble people, no mob. The very *rouge et noir* table did not think it worth its while to appear ; and although there was a most convenient pond for ducking such delinquents, I do not even remember to have heard of a pickpocket on the race-course.

The diversion was, as I have said, confined to the neighbourhood ; and they, poor innocent people, were, for the three days that the affair lasted, kept close to that most fatiguing of all work, country dissipation. The meeting was held early in September, and the hours having undergone no change since its first establishment a century before, it was what is termed an afternoon race : accordingly, besides a public breakfast at ten o'clock in the Town Hall, there was an ordinary at two at the Swan Hotel for ladies as well as gentlemen : then everybody drove at four to the course ; then everybody came back to dress for the ball ; and on the middle evening, when luckily there was no ball, everybody was expected to go to the play. And to miss, only for one day, the race-course, or the two balls, or the middle play, was an affront to the stewards and the stewards' wives,—to the members who dared not be absent—to the young ladies, who, not of sufficient rank or

fortune to be presented at court, first made their appearance at this august re-union of fashion and beauty — to the papas, mammas, and maiden aunts, to whom the ceremony was important, — to the whole neighbourhood and the whole county. The public breakfasts and ordinaries were not *de rigueur*; but three races, two balls, and one play, were duties that must be fulfilled, punishments that must be undergone by all who desired to stand well in country society: to have attempted to evade them, — to have dared to think for yourself in a matter of amusement, would have been to run the risk of being thought over-wise, or over-good, or parsimonious, or poor. And as no one likes the three first of these nicknames, and it is only rich people who can afford to be suspected of poverty, dull as the diversions were, and *triste* as the gaieties, we were content to leave shade, and coolness, and quiet, and to pass three of the hottest days of early autumn amid fatigue and dust, and sun and crowd, on the very same wise principle of imitation which makes a flock of geese follow the gander.

Lightly as the county was apt to set by the town, the inhabitants of Belford were of no small use on this occasion. They helped (like supernumeraries on the stage) to fill the ball-room and the theatre; and thinly covered as the race-course was, it would have looked emptier still but for the handsome coach of the Misses Morris — for Miss Blackall's chariot, with her black servant in his gayest livery and her pet poodle in his whitest coat on the box, and Mrs. Colby snugly intrenched in the best corner — for Stephen Lane and dear Margaret in their huge one-horse chaise, with a pretty grandchild betwixt them — for King Harwood galloping about the ground in ten places at once — for the tradespeople and artisans of the place, (I do love a holiday for them, whatever name it bears — they have too few,) down to the poor chimney-sweepers and their donkey, taking more interest in the sport than their betters, and enjoying it full as much.

Still the town ladies were little better than the figurante, the Coryphées in this grand ballet, — the young county damsels were the real heroines of the scene; and it was to show them off that their mammas and their waiting women, their milliners and their coachmakers, devoted all their cares; and amongst the fair candidates for admiration few were more indefatigably fine, more perseveringly fashionable, more constant to all sorts

of provincial gaiety, whether race, concert, play, or ball, than the Misses Elphinstone of Ashley, who had been for ten years, and perhaps a little longer, two of the reigning belles of the county.

Why it should be so, one does not well know, but half the ladies of H——shire used to meet every Monday between the hours of three and five in the Market-place of Belford. It was the constant female rendezvous. On Saturday, the market-day, the gentlemen came into town to attend the bench, — some on horseback, some in gigs, the style of the equipage not unfrequently in an inverse ratio to the consequence of the owner; your country gentleman of large fortune being often addicted to riding some scrubby pony, or driving some old shabby set-out, which a man of less certain station would be ashamed to be seen in: so that their appearance harmonized perfectly well with the carts and waggons of their tenants, the market people of Belford. Their wives and daughters, however, indulged in no such whims. True to the vanities of the dear sex, laudably constant to finery of all sorts, as regularly as Monday came were they to be seen in carriages the most fashionable, draw by the handsomest horses that coaxing or lecturing could extort from their husbands and fathers, crowded round the shop-door of Mr. Dobson, linen-draper and haberdasher, the most approved factor of female merchandise, and the favourite minister to female caprice in the whole county of H——; and amongst the many equipages which clustered about this grand mart of provincial fashion, none were more punctual, and few better appointed, than that of the Elphinstones of Ashley.

Mr. Elphinstone was a gentleman of large landed property; but the estate being considerably involved and strictly entailed, and the eldest son showing no desire to assist in its extrication, he was in point of fact a much poorer man than many of his neighbours with less than half of his nominal income. His wife, a lady of good family, had been what is called a fine woman; by which is understood a tall, showy figure, good hair, good teeth, good eyes, a tolerable complexion, and a face that comes somewhat short of what is commonly reckoned handsome. According to this definition, Mrs. Elphinstone had been, and her two elder daughters were, fine women; and as they dressed well, were excellent dancers, had a good deal

of air and style, and were at least half a head taller than the other young ladies of the county, they seldom failed to attract considerable admiration in the ball-room.

That their admirers went at the most no farther than a transient flirtation is to be accounted for, not so much by any particular defect in the young ladies, who were pretty much like other show-off girls, but by the certainty of their being altogether portionless. Very few men can afford to select wives with high notions and no fortune; and unwomanly and unmaidenly as the practice of husband-hunting is, whether in mothers or daughters, there is at least something of mitigation in the situation of young women like Gertrude and Julia Elphinstone, — accustomed to every luxury and indulgence, to all the amusements and refinement of cultivated society, and yet placed in such a position, that if not married before the death of their parents, they are thrown on the charity of their relations for the mere necessaries of life. With this prospect before their eyes, their anxiety to be settled certainly admits of some extenuation; and yet in most cases, and certainly in the present, that very anxiety is but too likely to defeat its object.

Year after year passed away: — Mr. Elphinstone's family, consisting, besides the young ladies whom I have already mentioned, of four or five younger lads in the army, the navy, at college, and at school, and of a weakly girl, who, having been sent to be nursed at a distant relation's, the wife of a gentleman-farmer at some distance, still remained in that convenient but ignoble retreat — became every year more and more expensive; whilst the chances of his daughters' marriage diminished with their increasing age and his decreasing income. The annual journey to London had been first shortened, then abandoned; visits to Brighton and Cheltenham, and other places of fashionable resort, became less frequent; and the Belford races, where, in spite of Mr. Elphinstone's reputed embarrassments, they still flourished amongst the county belles, became their principal scene of exhibition.

Race-ball after race-ball, however, came and departed, and brought nothing in the shape of a suitor to the expecting damsels. Partners for the dance presented themselves in plenty, but partners for life were still to seek. And Mrs. Elphinstone, in pettish despair, was beginning, on the first

evening of the very last year of the races, to rejoice at the prospect of their being given up ; to discover that the balls were fatiguing, the course dreary, and the theatre dull ; that the whole affair was troublesome and tiresome ; that it was in the very worst taste to be running after so paltry an amusement at the rate of sixteen hours a day for three successive days ; — when, in the very midst of her professions of disgust and indifference, as she was walking up the assembly-room with her eldest daughter hanging on her arm, (Miss Julia, a little indisposed and a little tired, not with the crowd, but the emptiness of the race-ground, having chosen to stay at home,) her hopes were suddenly revived by being told in a very significant manner by one of the stewards, that Lord Lindore had requested of him the honour of being presented to her daughter. “ He had seen her in the carriage that afternoon,” said the friendly master of the ceremonies, with a very intelligible smile, and an abrupt stop as the rapid advance of the young gentleman interrupted his speech and turned his intended confidence into — “ My Lord, allow me the pleasure of introducing you to Miss Elphinstone.”

Mr. Clavering’s suspicions were pretty evident ; and although the well-bred and self-commanded chaperon contrived to conceal her comprehension of his hints, and preserved the most decorous appearance of indifference, she yet managed to extract from her kind neighbour, that the elegant young nobleman who was leading the fair Gertrude to the dance was just returned from a tour in Greece and Germany, and being on his way to an estate about thirty miles off in the vale of Berkshire, had been struck on accidentally visiting the Belford race-course by the beauty of a young lady in an open landau, and having ascertained that the carriage belonged to Mr. Elphinstone, and that the family would certainly attend the ball, he had stayed, as it seemed, for the sole purpose of being introduced. “ So at least says report,” added Mr. Clavering ; and for once report said true.

Lord Lindore was a young nobleman of large but embarrassed property, very good talents, and very amiable disposition ; who was, in spite of his many excellent qualities, returning loiteringly and reluctantly home to one of the best and cleverest mothers in the world : and a less fair reason than the sweet and blooming face which peeped out so brightly

from under the brim of her cottage-bonnet (for cottage-bonnets were the fashion of that distant day) would have excused him to himself for a longer delay than that of the race-ball; his good mother, kind and clever as she was, having by a letter entreating his speedy return contrived to make that return as unpleasant as possible to her affectionate and dutiful son, — who, as a dutiful and affectionate son, obediently turned his face towards Glenham Abbey, whilst as a spoilt child and a peer of the realm, and in those two characters pretty much accustomed to carry matters his own way, he managed to make his obedience as dawdling and as dilatory as possible.

The letter which had produced this unlucky effect was an answer to one written by himself from Vienna, announcing the dissolution of a matrimonial engagement with a pretty Austrian, who had jilted him for the purpose of marrying a count of the Holy Roman empire old enough to be her grandfather: — on which event Lord Lindore, whose susceptibility to female charms was so remarkable that ever since he had attained the age of sixteen he had been in love with some damsel or other, and had been twenty times saved from the most preposterous matches by the vigilance of his tutors and the care of his fond mother, gravely felicitated himself on being emancipated, then and for ever, from the dominion of beauty; and declared, that if ever he should love again — which he thought unlikely — he should seek for nothing in woman but the unfading graces of the mind. Lady Lindore's reply contained a warm congratulation on her son's release from the chains of an unprincipled coquette, and from the evils of an alliance with a foreigner; adding, that she rejoiced above all to find that his heart was again upon his hands, since on the winding up of his affairs, preparatory to his coming of age, his guardians and herself had discovered that, long as his minority had been, the accumulations consequent thereupon were entirely swallowed up by the payment of his sister's portions; and the mortgages that encumbered his property could only be cleared away by the sale of the beautiful demesne on which she had resided during his absence abroad, — and which, although the estate that had been longest in the family, was the only one not strictly entailed, — or by the less painful expedient of a wealthy marriage. — “And now that your heart is free,” continued Lady Lindore, “there can

be but little doubt which measure you will adopt ; the more especially as I have a young lady in view, whose talents and attainments are of no common order, whose temper and disposition are most amiable, and who wants nothing but that outward beauty which you have at last been taught to estimate at its just value. Plain as you may possibly think her, her attractions of mind are such as to compensate most amply for the absence of more perishable charms ; whilst her fortune is so large that it would clear off all mortgages, without involving the wretched necessity of parting with this venerable mansion, which you have scarcely seen since you were a child, but which is alike precious as a proud memorial of family splendour, and as one of the finest old buildings in the kingdom. The lady's friends are most desirous of the connexion, and she herself loves me as a daughter. The path is straight before you. Return, therefore, as speedily as possible, my dear Arthur ; and remember, whatever perils from bright eyes and rosy cheeks may beset you on your way, that I expect from your duty and your affection that you will not commit yourself either by word or deed, by open professions or silent assiduities, until you have had an opportunity, not merely of seeing, but of becoming intimately acquainted with the amiable and richly-gifted young person whom, of all the women I have ever known, I would most readily select as your bride. Come, then, my dearest Arthur, and come speedily, to your affectionate mother, MARY LINDORE."

How so clear-headed a woman as Lady Lindore could write a letter so likely to defeat its own obvious purpose, and to awaken the spirit of contradiction in the breast of a young man, who, with all his acknowledged kindness of temper, had never been found wanting in a petulant self-will, would be difficult to explain, except upon the principle that the cleverest people often do the silliest things ; — a maxim, from the promulgation of which so many very stupid and very well-meaning persons derive pleasure, that to contradict it, even if one could do so conscientiously, would be to deprive a very large and estimable portion of the public of a source of enjoyment which does harm to nobody, inasmuch as the clever persons in question have an unlucky trick of caring little for what the worthy dull people aforesaid may happen to think or say.

Whatever motive might have induced her ladyship to write this letter, the effect was such as the reader has seen. Her dutiful son Arthur returned slowly and reluctantly homeward; loitering wherever he could find an excuse for loitering, astounding his active courier and alert valet by the dilatoriness of his movements, meditating all the way on the odiousness of blue-stockings women, (for from Lady Lindore's account of *la future*, he expected an epitome of all the arts and sciences — a walking and talking encyclopedia,) and feeling his taste for beauty grow stronger and stronger every step he took, until he finally surrendered his heart to the first pair of bright eyes and blooming cheeks which he had encountered since the receipt of his mother's letter — the pretty incognita of the Belford race-course.

Finding on inquiry that the carriage belonged to a gentleman of some consequence in the neighbourhood — that the ladies seated in it were his wife and daughters, and that there was little doubt of their attending the ball in the evening, he proceeded to the assembly-room, made himself known, as we have seen, to our friend Mr. Clavering, one of the stewards of the races, and requested of him the honour of an introduction to Miss Elphinstone.

When led up in due form to the fair lady, he immediately discovered that she was not the divinity of the landau: but as he had ascertained, both from Mr. Clavering and the waiter at the inn, that there was another sister, a certain Miss Julia, whom his two authorities agreed in calling the finer woman; and as he learned from his partner herself that Miss Julia had been that morning on the race-ground, — that she was slightly indisposed, but would probably be sufficiently recovered on the morrow to attend both the course and the play — he determined to remain another night at Belford for the chance of one more glimpse of his fair one, and paid Miss Elphinstone sufficient attention to conceal his disappointment and command a future introduction to her sister, although he had too much self-control, and, to do him justice, too much respect for Lady Lindore's injunctions, to avail himself of the invitation of the lady of the mansion to partake of a late breakfast, or an early dinner — call it how he chose — the next day at Ashley. He saw at a glance that she was a manœuvring mamma, (how very, very soon young gentlemen learn to make that disco-

very!) and, his charmer being absent, was upon his guard. "On the course," thought he, "I shall again see the beauty, and then —— why then I shall be guided by circumstances:" ——that being the most approved and circumspect way of signifying to one's self that one intends following one's own devices, whatsoever they may happen to be.

The morrow, however, proved so wet that the course was entirely deserted. Not a single carriage was present, except Miss Blackall's chariot and Stephen Lane's one-horse chaise. But in the evening, at the theatre, Lord Lindore had again the pleasure of seeing his fair enchantress, and of seeing her without her bonnet, and dressed to the greatest possible advantage in a very simply-made gown of clear muslin, without any other ornament than a nosegay of geranium and blossomed myrtle.

If he had thought her pretty under the straight brim of her cottage bonnet, he thought her still prettier now that her fair open forehead was only shaded by the rich curls of her chestnut hair. It was a round, youthful face, with a bright, clear complexion; a hazel eye, with a spark in it like the Scotch agate in the British Museum; very red lips, very white teeth, and an expression about the corners of the mouth that was quite bewitching. She sat in the front row of the box between her stately sister and another young lady; her mother and two other ladies sitting behind her, and completely barring all access.

Lord Lindore hardly regretted this circumstance, so completely was he absorbed in watching his charmer, whose every look and action evinced the most perfect unconsciousness of being an object of observation to him or to any one. Her attention was given entirely, exclusively to the stage; she being perhaps the one single person in the crowded house who thought of the play, and of the play only. The piece was one of Mr. Colman's laughing and crying comedies — John Bull, — and she laughed at Dennis Brulgluddery and cried at Job Thornberry with a heartiness and sensibility, a complete abandonment to the sentiment and the situation, that irresistibly suggested the idea of its being the first play she had ever seen. It was acted pretty much as such pieces (unless in the case of some rare exception) are acted in a country theatre; but hers was no critical pleasure: yielding entirely to the impression of

the drama, the finest performance could not have gratified her more. To her, as to an artless but intelligent child, the scene was for the moment a reality. The illusion was perfect, and the sympathy evinced by her tears and her laughter was as unrestrained as it was ardent. Her mother and sister, who had the bad taste to be ashamed of this enviable freshness of feeling, tried to check her. But the attempt was vain. Absorbed in the scene, she hardly heard them; and even when the curtain dropped, she seemed so engrossed by her recollections as scarcely to attend to her mother's impatient summons to leave the house.

"Charming creature!" thought Lord Lindore to himself, as he sat "taking his ease in his inn," after his return from the theatre; "Charming creature!—how delightful is this artlessness, this ignorance, this bewitching youthfulness of heart and of person! How incomparably superior is this lovely girl, full of natural feeling, of intelligence and sensibility, to an over-educated heiress, with the whole code of criticism at her finger's end—too practised to be astonished, and too wise to be pleased! A young lady of high attainments! Twenty languages, I warrant me, and not an idea! Ugly too!"—thought poor Lord Lindore. And then the beauty of the Belford theatre passed before his eyes, and he made up his mind to stay another day and ascertain at least if the voice were as captivating as the countenance.

Again was poor Arthur doomed to disappointment. The day was, if possible, more wet and dreary than the preceding; and on going into the ball-room and walking straight to Mrs. Elphinstone, image to yourself, gentle reader, his dismay at finding in Miss Julia an exact fac-simile of her elder sister,—another tall, stylish, fashionable-looking damsel, not very old, but of a certainty not what a lordling of one-and-twenty is accustomed to call young. Poor dear Arthur! if Lady Lindore could but have seen how blank he looked, she would have thought him almost enough punished for his disobedient meditations of the night before. His lordship was, however, a thoroughly well-bred man, and after a moment of consternation recovered his politeness and his self-possession.

"Was there not another young lady besides Miss Elphinstone and yourself in the carriage on Tuesday, and at the play last night?" inquired Lord Lindore in a pause of the dance.

“I was not at the play,” responded Miss Julia, — “but I suppose you mean Katy, poor dear Katy!”

“And who may Katy be?” demanded his lordship.

“Oh, poor little Katy! — she’s a sister of mine, a younger sister.”

“Very young, I presume? — not come out yet? — not introduced?”

“Yes! — no!” said Miss Julia, rather puzzled. “I don’t know — I can’t tell. The fact is, my lord, that Katy does not live with us. She was a sickly child, and sent for change of air to a distant relation of my mother’s — a very good sort of person indeed, very respectable and very well off, but who made a strange *mésalliance*. I believe her husband is a gentleman farmer, or a miller, or a malster, or something of that sort, so that they cannot be noticed by the family; but as they were very kind to Katy, and wished to keep her, having no children of their own, and the place agreed with her, she has stayed on with them. Mamma often talks of having her home. But she is very fond of them, and seems happy there, and has been so neglected, poor thing! that perhaps it is best that she should stay. And they are never contented without her. They sent for her home this morning. I don’t wonder that they love her,” added Miss Julia, “for she’s a sweet natural creature, so merry and saucy, and artless and kind. Everybody is glad when she comes, and sorry when she goes.”

This was praise after Lord Lindore’s own heart, and he tried to prolong the conversation.

“Would she have come to the ball to-night if she had stayed?”

“Oh no! She would not come on Tuesday. She never was at a dance in her life. But she wanted exceedingly to go to another play, and I dare say that papa would have taken her. She was enchanted with the play.”

“*That* I saw. She showed great sensibility. Her education has been neglected, you say?”

“She has had no education at all, except from the old rector of the parish, — a college tutor or some such oddity; and she is quite ignorant of all the things that other people know, but very quick and intelligent; so that” —

“Miss Julia Elphinstone,” said Mr. Clavering, coming up to Lord Lindore and his partner, and interrupting a colloquy

in which our friend Arthur was taking much interest, — “Miss Julia Elphinstone, Lady Selby has sprained her ankle, and is obliged to sit down ; so that I must call upon you to name this dance. Come, young ladies ! — to your places ! What dance do you call, Miss Julia ?”

And in balancing between the merits of “The Dusty Miller” and “Money Musk” (for this true story occurred in the merry days of country dances), and then in mastering the pleasant difficulties of going down an intricate figure and remarking on the mistakes of the other couples, the subject dropped so effectually that it was past the gentleman’s skill to recall.

Nor could he extort a word on the topic from his next partner, Miss Elphinstone, who, somewhat cleverer than her sister — colder, prouder, and more guarded, took especial pains to conceal what she esteemed a blot on the family escutcheon from one whose rank would, she thought, make him still more disdainful than herself of any connection with the yeomanry, or, as she called them, the farmer and miller people of the country. He could not even learn the place of his fair one’s residence, or the name of the relations with whom she lived, and returned to his inn in a most unhappy frame of mind, dissatisfied with himself and with all about him.

A sleepless night had, however, the not uncommon effect of producing a wise and proper resolution. He determined to proceed immediately to Glenham, and open his mind to his fond mother, — the friend, after all, most interested in his happiness, and most likely to enter into his feelings, however opposed they might be to her own views. “She has a right to my confidence, kind and indulgent as she has always been — I will lay my whole heart before her,” thought Arthur. He had even magnanimity enough to determine, if she insisted upon the measure, that he would take a look at the heiress. “Seeing is not marrying,” thought Lord Lindore ; “and if she be really as ugly and as pedantic as I anticipate, I shall have a very good excuse for getting off — to say nothing of the chance of her disliking me. I’ll see her, at all events, — that can do no harm ; and then — why then — *alors comme alors !* as my friend the baron says. At all events, I’ll see her.”

In meditations such as these passed the brief and rapid

journey between Belford and Glenham. The morning was brilliantly beautiful, the distance little more than thirty miles, and it was still early in the day when the noble oaks of his ancestral demesne rose before him in the splendid foliage of autumn.

The little village of Glenham was one of those oases of verdure and cultivation which are sometimes to be met with in the brown desert of the Berkshire Downs. It formed a pretty picture to look down upon from the top of one of the turfy hills by which it was surrounded: the cottages and cottage gardens; the church rising amongst lime-trees and yews; the parsonage close by; the winding road; the great farmhouse, with its suburb of ricks and barns, and stables and farm-buildings, surrounded by richly-timbered meadows, extensive coppices, and large tracts of arable land; and the abbey, with its beautiful park, its lake, and its woods, stretching far into the distance, — formed an epitome of civilised life in all its degrees, — an island of fertility and comfort in the midst of desolation. Lord Lindore felt, as he gazed, that to be the owner of Glenham was almost worth the sacrifice of a young man's fancy.

Still more strongly did this feeling press upon him, mixed with all the tenderest associations of boyhood, as, in passing between the low Gothic lodges, the richly-wrought iron gate was thrown open to admit him by the well-remembered portress, a favourite pensioner of his mother's, her head slightly shaking with palsy, her neatly-attired person bent with age, and her hand trembling partly from infirmity and partly from joy at the sight of her young master; — more and more was the love of his lovely home strengthened as he drove through the noble park, with its majestic avenues, its clear waters and magnificent woods, to the venerable mansion which still retained, in its antique portal, its deep bay windows, its turrets, towers, and pinnacles, its cloisters and its terraces, so many vestiges of the incongruous but picturesque architecture of the age of the Tudors: and by the time that he was ushered by the delighted old butler into the presence of Lady Lindore — a dignified and still handsome woman, full of grace and intellect, who, seated in the stately old library, looked like the very spirit of the place, — he was so entirely absorbed in early recollections and domestic affections — had so completely for-

gotten his affairs of the heart, the beauty with whom he was so reasonably in love, and the heiress whom with equal wisdom he hated, that, when his mother mentioned the subject, it came upon him with a startling painfulness like the awaking from a pleasant dream.

He had, however, sufficient resolution to tell her the truth, and the whole truth, although the almost smiling surprise with which she heard the story was not a little mortifying to his vanity. A young man of one-and-twenty cares little for a lecture; but to suppose himself an object of ridicule to a person of admitted talent is insupportable. Such was unfortunately poor Arthur's case at the present moment.

"So much for arriving at what the law calls years of discretion," observed Lady Lindore, quietly resuming her embroidery. "From the time you wrote yourself sixteen, until this very hour, that silly heart of yours has been tossed like a shuttlecock from one pretty girl to another; and now you celebrate your coming of age by the sage avowal of loving a lady whom you have never spoken to, and hating another whom you have never seen—Well! I suppose you must have your own way. But, without questioning the charms and graces of this Katy of yours, just be pleased to tell me why you have taken such an aversion to my poor little girl. Is it merely because she has the hundred thousand pounds necessary to clear off your mortgages?"

"Certainly not."

"Or because I unluckily spoke of her talents?"

"Not of her talents, dear mother: no son of yours could dislike clever women. But you spoke of her as awfully accomplished——"

"I never said a word of her accomplishments."

"As awfully learned, then——"

"Neither do I remember speaking of that."

"At all events, as awfully wise. And, dearest mother, your wise ladies and literary ladies are, not to say any thing affronting, too wise for me. I like something artless, simple, natural—a wild, gay, playful creature, full of youthful health and life, with all her girlish tastes about her; fond of birds and flowers——"

"And charmed with a country play," added Lady Lindore, completing her son's sentence. "Well! we must find out

this Katy of yours, if indeed the fancy holds. In the meanwhile, I have letters to write to your guardians ; and you can revisit your old haunts in the grounds till dinner-time, when you will see this formidable heiress, and will, I trust, treat her at least with the politeness of a gentleman, and the attention due from the master of the house to an unoffending guest."

"She is here then?" inquired Lord Lindore.

"She was in this room in search of a book not half an hour before your arrival."

"Some grave essay or learned treatise, doubtless!" thought Arthur within himself; and then assuring his mother of his attention to her commands, he followed her suggestion and strolled out into the park.

The sun was yet high in the heavens, and the beautiful scene around him, clothed in the deep verdure of September, seemed rejoicing in his beams, — the lake, especially, lay sparkling in the sunshine like a sheet of molten silver; and almost unconsciously Lord Lindore directed his steps to a wild glen near the water, which had been the favourite haunt of his boyhood.

It was a hollow dell, surrounded by steep banks, parted from the lake by a thicket of fern and holly and old thorn, much frequented by the deer, and containing in its bosom its own deep silent pool, dark and bright as a diamond, with a grotto scooped out of one side of the hill, which in his childish days had been decayed and deserted, and of which he had taken possession for his fishing-tackle and other boyish property. Lady Lindore had, however, during his absence taken a fancy to the place; had extended the stone-work, and covered it with climbing plants; had made walks and flower-beds round the pool, indenting the pond itself with banks, bays, and headlands; had erected one or two rustic seats; — and it formed now, under the name of The Rockery, a very pretty lady's garden — all the prettier that the improvements had been managed with great taste — that the scene retained much of its original wildness, its irregularity of form and variety of shadow — and that even in the creepers which trailed about the huge masses of stone, indigenous plants were skilfully mingled with the more gorgeous exotics. On this lovely autumn day it looked like a piece of fairy-land, and

Lord Lindore stood gazing at the scene from under the ivied arch which led into its recesses with much such a feeling of delight and astonishment as must have been caused to Aladdin the morning after the slaves of the lamp had erected his palace of jewels and gold.

There are no jewels, after all, like the living gems called flowers; and never were flowers so bright, so gorgeous, so beautiful, as in the Glenham Rockery. Convolvuluses of all colours, passion-flowers of all shades, clematises of twenty kinds, rich nasturtiums, sweet musk-roses, pearly-blossomed myrtles, starry jessamines, and a hundred splendid exotics, formed a glowing tapestry round the walls,—whose tops were crowned by velvet snapdragons, and large bushes of the beautiful cistus, called the rock rose; whilst beds of geraniums, of lobellias, of calceolaria, and of every sort of gay annual, went dotting round the pool, and large plants of the blue hydrangea grew low upon the banks, and the long coral blossoms of the fuschia hung like weeping-willows into the water. Bees were busy in the honied tubes of the different coloured sultans, and dappled butterflies were swinging in the rich flowers of the China-aster; gold and silver fishes were playing in the pond, and the songster of early autumn, the ever-cheerful redbreast, was twittering from the tree. But bees, and birds, and butterflies were not the only tenants of the Glenham Rockery.

A group well suited to the scene, and so deeply occupied as to be wholly unconscious of observation, was collected near the entrance of the grotto. Adam Griffith, the well-remembered old gardener, with his venerable white locks, was standing, receiving and depositing in a covered basket certain prettily folded little packets delivered to him by a young lady, who, half sitting, half kneeling, was writing with a pencil the names of the flower-seeds (for such it seemed they were) on each nicely-arranged parcel. A fawn with a silver collar, and a very large Newfoundland dog, were amicably lying at her side. The figure was light, and round, and graceful; the air of the head (for her straw bonnet was also performing the office of a basket) was exquisitely fine, and the little white hand that was writing under old Adam's dictation might have served as a model for a sculptor. If these indications had not been sufficient to convince him that the incognita was not

his nightmare the heiress, the first words she uttered would have done so.

“What name did you say, Adam?”

“Eschscholtzia Californica! Oh dear me! I shall never write that without a blunder. How I do wish they would call flowers by pretty simple short names now-a-days, as they used to do! How much prettier words lilies and roses are than Es—— What did you say, Adam?”

“Eschscholtzia, Miss; 'tis a strange heathenish name, to be sure — Eschscholtzia Californica,” replied Adam.

“Esch—scholt—zia! Is that right, Adam? Look.”

And Adam assumed his spectacles, examined and assented.

“Eschscholtzia Cali——” And the fair seed gatherer was proceeding gravely with her task, when the little fawn, whose quick sense of hearing was alarmed at some slight motion of Arthur's, bounded suddenly up, jerked the basket out of old Adam's hand, which fell (luckily tightly closed) into the water, and was immediately followed by the Newfoundland dog, who with no greater damage than alarming a whole shoal of gold and silver fish, who wondered what monster was coming upon them, and wetting his own shaggy coat, rescued the basket, and bore it triumphantly to his mistress.

“Fie, Leila! Good Nelson!” exclaimed their fair mistress, turning round to caress her dog — “Lord Lindore!”

“Katy! — Miss Elphinstone!”

And enchanted to see her, and bewildered at finding her there (for Katy it really was — the very Katy of the Belford Race-ground), Lord Lindore joined the party, shook hands with old Adam, patted Nelson, made friends with Leila, and finally found himself *tête-à-tête* with his fair mistress; she sitting on one of the great low stones of the Rockery; he reclining at her side, just like that most graceful of all lovers Hamlet the Dane at the feet of Ophelia, — but with feelings differing as completely from those of that most sweet and melancholy prince, as happiness from misery. Never had Lord Lindore been so happy before! — never (and it is saying much, considering the temperament of the young gentleman), never half so much in love!

It would not be fair, even if it were possible, to follow the course of a conversation that lasted two hours, which seemed to them as two minutes.

They talked of a thousand things : first of flower-seeds, — and she introduced him to the beautiful winged seeds of the geranium, with the curious elastic corkscrew curl at the bottom of its silvery plume ; and to that miniature shuttlecock which gives its name to one species of larkspur ; and to the minute shining sandlike seed of the small lilac campanula, and the bright jet-like bullets of the fraxinella, and the tiny lilac balls of the white petunia ; and to the heavy nutmeg-like seeds of the marvel of Peru : and they both joined in loving flowers and in hating hard names.

And then he tried to find out how she came there : and she told him that she lived close by ; that the dear and kind relation with whom she resided was married to Mr. John Hale, his old tenant —

“ John Hale ! ” interrupted Lord Lindore — “ Old John Hale, the great farmer, great mealman, great maltster, the richest yeoman in Berkshire ! — the most respectable of his respectable class ! — John Hale, who has accumulated his ample fortune with every man’s good word, and has lived eighty years in the world without losing a friend or making an enemy ! — I have thought too little of these things ; but I have always been proud of being the landlord of John Hale ! ”

“ Oh, how glad I am to hear you say so ! ” cried Katy. “ He and his dear wife — his mistress, as he calls her — are so good to everybody and so kind to me ! How glad I am to hear you say that ! ”

The tears glistened in her beautiful eyes ; and Lord Lindore, after a little more praise of his venerable tenant, began talking of her own family, of the races, and of the play. And Katy laughed at her admiration of the acting, and acknowledged her delight with the most genuine *naïveté*.

“ I did like it,” said Katy : “ and I should like to go to the play every night ; and I don’t wish to become too wise to be pleased, like mamma and Gertrude. But I should like to see Shakspeare acted best,” added she, pointing to a book at her side, which Lord Lindore had not observed before. He took it up, and it opened of itself at “ Much ado about Nothing ; ” and they naturally fell into talk upon the subject of the great poet of England, — a subject which can never be worn out until nature herself is exhausted.

"I should think," said Katy, "that an actress of real talent would rather play Beatrice than any other part. Lady Lindore says that it is too saucy — but I think not ; provided always that the sauciness be very sweetly spoken. That, however, is not what I love best in Beatrice : it is her uncalculating friendship for Hero, her devotion to her injured cousin, her generous indignation at the base suspicions of Claudio. I don't know what the critics may say of the matter ; but in my mind the fervid ardency of Beatrice, her violent — and the more violent because powerless — anger, forms the most natural female portrait in all Shakspeare. Imogen, Juliet, Desdemona, are all charming in their several ways, but none of them come up to that scolding."

"You think scolding, then, natural to a woman?"

"To be sure, when provoked. What else can she do? You would not have her fight, would you? And yet Beatrice had as good a mind for a battle as any woman that ever lived. Hark! There's the dressing-bell. You and I must fight out this battle another time," said she, with something of the sweet sauciness she had described. "Good b'ye till dinner-time, my lord. — Lelia! Nelson!"

And followed by her pets, Katy ran off by an entrance to the Rockery which he had not seen before. Arthur was about to trace the windings of the labyrinth and follow the swift-footed beauty, when his mother's voice arrested him. She was standing under the ivied arch by which he had entered.

"Well, Arthur, how do you like the little heiress?"

"Mother!"

"Ay, the little heiress, — the learned, the ugly, and the wise! Your Katy! My Katy!"

"And are they really one? And had you the heart to frighten me in this cruel way for nothing?"

"Nay, Arthur, not for nothing! If I had called Katy as pretty as I thought her, there was great danger that the very commendation might have provoked you into setting up some opposite standard of beauty. I have selected a Hebe, you would have chosen a Juno. For, after all, your falling in love with her dear self at Belford Races, which I could not foresee, was as much the result of the spirit of contradiction as of anything else. Heaven grant that, now you know she has a hundred thousand pounds, you may not for that reason

think fit to change your mind ! For the rest, you now, I suppose, understand that good old John Hale (whose riches are not at all suspected by those foolish persons, Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone) proposed the match to me on finding at once your embarrassments and my fondness for his young relation, who, since the marriage of my own children, has been as a daughter in my house ; and who is the kindest and dearest little girl that ever trod this work-a-day world."

"And learned?" inquired Lord Lindore, laughing.

"That you must inquire into yourself," replied his mother. "But if it should turn out that Doctor Wilmot, our good rector, finding her a child of seven years old, with very quick parts and very little instruction, took her education in hand, and has enabled her at twenty to gratify her propensity for the drama, by understanding Schiller and Calderon as well as you do, and Eschylus and Sophocles much better, why then you will have to consider how far your philosophy and her beauty may enable you to support the calamity. For my part, I hold the opinion that knowledge untainted by pedantry or vanity seldom does harm to man or woman ; and Katy's bright eyes may possibly convert you to the same faith. In the mean while, you have nothing to do but to make love ; a language, in which, from long practice, I presume you to be sufficiently well versed to play the part of instructor."

"Oh mother ! have some mercy !"

"And as the fair lady dines here, you may begin your lessons this very evening. So now, my dear Arthur, go and dress."

And with another deprecating "O mother !" the happy son kissed Lady Lindore's hand, and they parted.

THE ABSENT MEMBER.

EVERYBODY remembers the excellent character of an absent man by La Bruyère, since so capitally dramatised by Isaac Bickerstaff ; [why does not Mr. Liston revive the piece ? — he would be irresistibly amusing in the part] ; — everybody remembers the character, and everybody would have thought

the whole account a most amusing and pleasant invention, had not the incredible facts been verified by the sayings and doings of a certain Parisian count, whose name has escaped me, a well-known individual of that day, whose *distractions* (I use the word in the French sense, and not in the English) set all exaggeration at defiance,—who was, in a word, more *distract* than *Le Distract* of La Bruyère.

He, “that nameless he,” still remains unrivalled ; as an odd Frenchman, when such a thing turns up, which is seldom, will generally be found to excel at all points your English oddity, which is comparatively common. No single specimen so complete in its kind has appeared in our country ; but the genus is by no means extinct ; and every now and then, especially amongst learned men, great mathematicians, and eminent Grecians, one has the luck to light upon an original, whose powers of perception and memory are subject to lapses the most extraordinary,—fits of abstraction, during which every thing that passes falls unobserved into some pit of forgetfulness, like the oubliette of an old castle, and is never seen or heard of again.

My excellent friend, Mr. Coningsby, is just such a man. The Waters of Oblivion of the Eastern Fairy Tale, or the more classical Lethe, are but types to shadow forth the extent and variety of his anti-recollective faculty. Let the fit be strong upon him, and he shall not recognise his own mansion or remember his own name. Suppose him at Whitehall, and the fire which burnt the two Houses would at such a time hardly disturb him. You might, at certain moments, commit murder in his presence with perfect impunity. He would not know the killer from the killed.

Of course this does not happen every day ; or rather opportunities of so striking a character do not often fall in his way, or doubtless he would not fail to make the most of them. Of the smaller occasions, which can occur more frequently, he is pretty sure to take advantage ; and, from the time of his putting on two different coloured stockings, when getting up in the morning, to that of his assuming his wife’s laced nightcap on going to bed, his every-day’s history is one perpetual series of blunders and mistakes.

He will salt his tea, for instance, at breakfast-time, and put sugar on his muffin, and swallow both messes without the

slightest perception of his having at all deviated from the common mode of applying those relishing condiments. With respect to the quality of his food, indeed, he is as indifferent as Dominie Sampson ; and he has been known to fill his glass with vinegar instead of sherry, and to pour a ladle of turtle-soup over his turbot instead of lobster-sauce ; and doubtless would have taken both the eatables and drinkables very quietly, had not his old butler, on the watch against such occurrences, whisked both glass and plate away with the celerity of Sancho's physician, Don —— Bless me ! I have forgotten that name also ! I said that this subject was contagious — Don —— he who officiated in the island of Baratania — Don —— No, Doctor Pedro Rezio de Agüero, that is the title to which the gentleman answers : — Well, the vinegar would have been drunken, and the turbot and turtle-sauce eaten, had not the vigilant butler played the part of Don Pedro Rezio, and whipped off the whole concern, whilst the good man, his master, sat in dubious meditation, wondering what had become of his dinner, and not quite certain that he might not have eaten it, until a plateful of more salubrious and less incongruous viands — ham and chicken, for instance, or roast beef and French beans — was placed before him, and settled the question. But for that inestimable butler, a coroner's inquest would have been held upon him long ago.

After breakfast he would dress, thrice happy if the care of his valet protected him from shaving with a pruning knife, or putting on his waistcoat wrong side out : being dressed, he would prepare for his morning ride, mounting, if his groom did not happen to be waiting, the very first four-footed animal that came in his way, sometimes the butcher's horse, with a tray nicely balanced before — sometimes the postboy's donkey, with the letter-bags swinging behind — sometimes his daughter's pony, side-saddle notwithstanding ; and, when mounted, forth he sallies, rather in the direction which his steed may happen to prefer than in that which he himself had intended to follow.

Bold would be the pen that should attempt even a brief summary of the mistakes committed in one single morning's ride. If he proceed, as he frequently does, to our good town of Belford, he goes for wrong things, to the wrong shops ; miscalls the people whom he accosts (seldom, indeed, shall he

hit on the proper name, title, or vocation of any one whom he chances to address) ; asks an old bachelor after his wife, and an old maid after her children ; and finally sums up a morning of blunders by going to the inn where he had not left his horse, and quietly stepping into some gig or phaeton prepared for another person. In a new neighbourhood this appropriation of other people's property might bring our hero into an awkward dilemma ; but the man and his ways are well known in our parts ; and, when the unlucky owner of the abstracted equipage arrives in a fury, and demands of the astounded ostler what has become of his carriage, one simple exclamation, " Mr. Coningsby, sir ! " is at once felt by the aggrieved proprietor to be explanation enough.

Should morning calls be the order of the day, he contrives to make a pretty comfortable confusion in that simple civility. First of all, he can hardly gallop along the king's highway without getting into a *démêlé* with the turnpike-keepers ; sometimes riding quietly through a gate without paying the slightest attention to their demand for toll ; at others, tossing them, without dreaming of stopping to receive the change, a shilling or a sovereign, as the case may be : for, although great on the currency question — (have I not said that the gentleman is a county member ?) — he is practically most happily ignorant of the current coin of the realm, and would hardly know gold from silver, if asked to distinguish between them. This event, is a perfect Godsend to the gatekeeper ; who, confiding in the absolute deafness produced by his abstraction, calls after him with a complete assurance that he may be honest with impunity, and that, bawl as he may, there is no more chance of his arresting his passenger, than the turnpike-man of Ware had of stopping Johnny Gilpin. Accordingly, after undergoing the ceremony of offering change, he pockets the whole coin with a safe conscience. Beggars (and he is very charitable) find their account also in this ignorance : he flings about crowns for penny-pieces, and half-sovereigns for sixpences, relieving the same set a dozen times over, and getting quit of a pocketful of money — (for though he have a purse, he seldom remembers to make use of it — luckily seldom — for if he do fill that gentlemanly net-work, he is sure to lose it, cash, bank-notes, and all) — in the course of a morning's ride.

Arrived at the place of his destination, the house at which he is to call, a new scene of confusion is pretty sure to arise. In the first place, it rarely happens that he does arrive at the veritable mansion to which his visit is intended. He is far more likely to ride to the wrong place, inquire of the bewildered footman for some name not his master's, and be finally ushered into a room full of strangers, persons whom he neither visits nor knows, who stare and wonder what brought him, whilst he, not very sure whether he ought to remember them, whether they be his acquaintances or not, stammers out an apology and marches off again. (N. B. He once did this whilst canvassing for the county to a rival candidate, and finding only the lady of the house, entreated her, in the most insinuating manner, to exert her influence with her husband for his vote and interest. This passed for a deep stroke of finesse amongst those who did not know him — they who did, laughed and exclaimed, Mr. Coningsby !") Or he shall commit the reverse mistake, and riding to the right house, shall ask for the wrong people, or, finding the family out, he shall have forgotten his own name — I mean his name-tickets — and shall leave one from his wife's or daughter's card-case, taken up by that sort of accident which is to him second nature ; — or he shall unite all these blunders, and leave at a house where he himself does not visit a card left at his own mansion by a third person, who is also unacquainted with the family to which so unconsciously that outward sign and token of acquaintanceship had travelled.

Imagine the mistakes and the confusions occasioned by such doings in a changeable neighbourhood, much broken into parties by politics and election contests ! Sometimes it does good, — as between two old country squires, who, having been friends all their lives, had quarrelled about the speed of a greyhound and the decision of a course, and had mutually vowed never to approach each other's door. The sight of his antagonist's card (left in one of Mr. Coningsby's absent fits) so mollified the more testy elder of the two, that he forthwith returned the visit, and the opposite party being luckily not at home, a card was left there also ; and either individual thinking the concession first made to himself, was emulous in stepping forward with the most cordial hand-shaking when they met casually at dinner at a third place.

But Mr. Coningsby's visiting blunders were not always so fortunate ; where they healed one breach, they made twenty, and once had very nearly occasioned a duel betwixt two youngsters, lords of neighbouring manors, between whose gamekeepers there was an outstanding feud. The card left was taken for a cartel — a note of defiance ; and, but for the interference of constables, and mayors, and magistrates, and aunts, and sisters, and mammas, and peace-preservers of all ages and sexes, some very hot blood would inevitably have been spilt. As it was, the affair terminated in a grand effusion of ink ; the correspondence between the seconds, a delicious specimen of polite and punctilious quarrelling, having been published for the edification of the world, and filling three columns of the county newspapers. It came to no conclusion ; for, although the one party conceded that a card had been left, and the other that the person to whom the name belonged did not leave it, yet how the thing *did* arrive on that hall table remained a mystery. The servant who opened the door happened to be a stranger, and somehow or other nobody ever thought of Mr. Coningsby ; — nay, he himself, although taking a great interest in the dispute, and wondering over the puzzle like the rest of the neighbourhood, never once recollected his own goings on that eventful morning, nor dreamt that it could be through his infirmity that Sir James Mor-daunt's card was left at Mr. Chandler's house ; — to so incredible a point was his forgetfulness carried.

If in so simple a matter as morning visiting he contrived to produce such confusion, think how his genius must have expanded when so dangerous a weapon as a pen got into his hands ! I question if he ever wrote a letter in his life without some blunder in the date, the address, the signature, or the subject. He would indite an epistle to one person, direct it to another, and send it to a third, who could not conceive from whom it came, because he had forgotten to put his name at the bottom. But of the numerous perplexities to which he was in the habit of giving rise, franks were by very far the most frequent cause. Ticklish things are they even to the punctual and the careful ; and to Mr. Coningsby the giving one quite perfectly right seemed an impossibility. There was the date to consider, the month, the day of the month, the year — I have known him write the wrong century ; — then

came the name, the place, the street, and number, if in London — if in the country, the town and county ; — then, lastly, his own name, which, for so simple an operation as it seems, he would contrive generally to omit, and sometimes to boggle with, now writing only his patronymic as if he were a peer, now only his Christian name as if a prince, and now an involution of initials that defied even the accurate eye of the clerks of the Post Office. Very, very few can have been the franks of his that escaped paying.

Of course his friends and acquaintance were forewarned, and escaped the scrape (for it is one) of making their correspondents pay triple postage. Bountiful as he was in his offers of service in this way, (and, keeping no account of the numbers, he would just as readily give fifty as one,) none incurred the penalty save strangers and the unwary. I, for my own part, never received but one letter directed by him in my life, and in the address of that, the name — my name, the name of the person to whom the letter was written — was wanting. “ Three Mile Cross ” held the place usually occupied by “ Miss Mitford.”

“ Three Mile Cross,
Reading,
Berks,”

ran the direction. But as I happened to receive about twenty times as many letters, and especially franked letters, as all the good people of the “ Cross ” put together, the packet was sent first to me, by way of experiment ; and, as I recognised the seal of a dear friend and old correspondent, I felt no scruple in appropriating for once, like a Scottish laird, the style and title of the place where I reside. And I and the postmaster were right : the epistle was, as it happened, intended for me.

Notes would, in his hands, have been still more dangerous than letters ; but from this peril he was generally saved by the caution of the two friends most anxious for his credit, — his wife and the old butler, who commonly contrived, the one to write the answers to all invitations or general billets that arrived at the house, the other to watch that none from him should pass without due scrutiny. Once, however, he escaped their surveillance ; and the consequence was an adventure which, though very trifling, proved, in the first instance, so uncomfortable as

to cause both his keepers to exert double vigilance for the future. Thus the story ran : —

A respectable, but not wealthy, clergyman had been appointed to a living about ten miles off — had married, and brought home his bride ; and Mr. Coningsby, who, as county member, called upon everybody within a still wider circuit, paid a visit in due form, accompanied by, or rather accompanying, his lady ; which call having been duly returned (neither party being at home), was followed at the proper interval by an invitation for Mr. and Mrs. Ellis to dine at Coningsby House. The invitation was accepted ; but, when the day arrived, the dangerous illness of a near relation prevented the young couple from keeping their engagement ; and, some time after, the fair bride began to think it necessary to return the civilities of her neighbours, by giving her first dinner-party. Notes of invitation were despatched accordingly to four families of consequence, amongst them Mr. Coningsby's ; but it was the busy Christmas-time, when, between family parties, and London visitors, and children's balls, everybody's evenings were bespoken for weeks beforehand ; and from three of her friends, accordingly, she received answers declining her invitation, and pleading pre-engagements. From the Coningsbys, only, no note arrived. But accidentally Mr. Ellis heard that they were to go at Christmas on a distant visit, and, taking for granted that the invitation had not reached the worthy member or his amiable lady, Mrs. Ellis, instead of attempting to collect other friends, made up her mind to postpone her party to a more convenient season.

The day on which the dinner was to have been given proved so unfavourable that our young couple saw good cause to congratulate themselves on their resolution. The little hamlet of East Longford, amongst the prettiest of our North-of-Hampshire villages, so beautiful in the summer, from the irregularities of the ground, the deep woody lanes hollowed like water-courses, the wild commons which must be passed to reach it, and the profound seclusion of the one straggling street of cottages and cottage-like houses, with the vicarage, placed like a bird's-nest on the side of a steep hill, clothed to the very top with beech-woods ; this pretty hamlet, so charming in its summer verdure, its deep retirement, and its touch of wildness in the midst of civilisation, was from those very circumstances

no tempting spot in mid-winter: vast tracts across the commons were then nearly impassable; the lanes were sloughs; and the village itself, rendered insulated and inaccessible by the badness of the roads, conveyed no other feeling than that of dreariness and loneliness. Mr. and Mrs. Ellis, who, although not insensible of the inconveniences of their abode, had made up their minds to bear the evil and enjoy the good of their situation, could not yet help congratulating themselves, as they sat in their snug dining parlour, after a five o'clock dinner, on the postponement of their party. "The snow is above a foot deep, and the bridge broken, so that neither servants nor horses could have got to the Parrot; and where could we have housed them?" said the gentleman. "And the drawing-room smokes so, in this heavy atmosphere, that we cannot light a fire there," responded the lady. "Never, to be sure, was anything so fortunate!"

And, just as the word was spoken, a carriage and four drove up to the door, and exactly at half-past six (the hour named in the invitation) Mr. and Mrs. Coningsby were ushered into the room.

Imagine the feelings of four persons, who had never met before, in such a situation — especially of the two ladies. Mrs. Ellis, dinner over, with the consciousness of the half bottle of port and the quarter of sherry, the apples, the nuts, the single pair of mould candles, her drawing-room fire that could not be lighted, her dinner to provide as well as to cook, and her own dark merino and black silk apron! Poor Mrs. Coningsby, on the other hand, seeing at a glance how the case stood, feeling for the trouble that they were giving, and sinking under a consciousness far worse to bear than Mrs. Ellis's — the consciousness of being overdressed, — how heartily did she wish herself at home again! or, if that were too much to desire, what would she have given to have replaced her claret-coloured satin gown, her hat with its white plumes, her pearls and her rubies, back again in their wardrobes and cases.

It was a trial of no ordinary nature to the good sense, good breeding, and good humour of both parties; and each stood it well. There happened to be a cold round of beef in the house, some undressed game, and plenty of milk and eggs; the next farmer had killed a pig; and, with pork chops, cold beef, a pheasant, and apple fritters, all very nicely prepared,

more fastidious persons than Mr. and Mrs. Coningsby might have made a good dinner. The host brought out his best claret; the pretty hostess regained her smiles, and forgot her black apron and her dark merino; and, what was a far more difficult achievement, the fair visitor forgot her plumes and her satin. The evening, which began so inauspiciously, ended pleasantly and sociably; and, when the note (taken, as was guessed, by our hero from the letter-boy, with the intention of sending it by a groom) was found quietly ensconced in his waistcoat pocket, Mrs. Coningsby could hardly regret the termination of her present adventure, although fully resolved never again to incur a similar danger.

Of his mishaps when attending his duty in parliament, and left in some measure to his own guidance, (for, having no house in town, his family only go for about three months in the season,) there is no end. Some are serious, and some very much the reverse. Take a specimen of his London scrapes.

Our excellent friend wears a wig, made to imitate a natural head of hair, which it is to be presumed that at the best of times it does not very closely resemble, and which, after a week of Mr. Coningsby's wearing, put on with the characteristic negligence of his habits, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other,—always awry, and frequently hindside before,—assumes such a demeanour as never was equalled by Christian peruke at any time or in any country.

One day last winter, being in London without a servant, he by some extraordinary chance happened to look in the glass when he was dressing, and became aware of the evil state of his caxon;—a piece of information for which he had generally been indebted to one of his two guardians, Mrs. Coningsby or the old butler;—and, recollecting that he was engaged to a great dinner-party the ensuing evening, stepped into the first hairdresser's shop that he passed to bespeak himself a wig; where, being a man of exceedingly pleasant and jocular manners, (your oddities, allowing for the peculiar oddness, are commonly agreeable persons,) he passed himself off for a bachelor to the artificer of hair, and declared that his reason for desiring a wig of peculiar beauty and becomingness was that he was engaged to a great party the next day, at which he expected to meet the lady of his heart, and that his fate and fortune depended on the set of his curls. This he impressed

very strongly on the mind of the perruquier, who, an enthusiast in his art, as a great artist should be, saw nothing extraordinary in the fact of a man's happiness hanging on the cut of his wig, and gravely promised that no exertion should be wanting on his part to contribute to the felicity of his customer, and that the article in question, as perfect as hands could make it, should be at his lodgings the next evening at seven.

Punctual to the hour arrived the maker of perukes ; and, finding Mr. Coningsby not yet returned to dress, went to attend another appointment, promising to come back in half an hour. In half an hour accordingly the man of curls reappeared — just in time to see a cabriolet driving rapidly from the door, at which a maid-servant stood tittering.

“Where is Mr. Coningsby ?” inquired the perruquier.

“Just gone out to dinner,” replied the girl ; “and a queer figure he is, sure enough. He looks, for all the world, like an owl in an ivy-bush !”

“To be sure, he has not got his new wig on — my wig !” returned the alarmed artist. “He never can be such a fool as that !”

“He's fool enough for anything in the way of forgetting or not attending, although a main clever man in other respects,” responded our friend Sally ; “and he has got a mop of hair on his head, whoever made it, that would have served for half a dozen wigs.”

“The article was sent home untrimmed, just as it was woven,” replied the unfortunate fabricator, in increasing consternation ; “and a capital article it is. I came by his own direction to cut and curl it, according to the shape of his face ; the gentleman being particular about the set of it, because he's going a-courting.”

“Going a-courting !” exclaimed Sally, amazed in her turn ; “the Lord ha' mercy upon the poor wretch ! If he has not clean forgot that he's married, and is going to commit big — big — bigotry, or bigoly — I don't know what you call it — to have two wives at once ! and then he'll be hanged. Going a-courting ! What'll Madam say ! He'll come to be hanged, sure enough !”

“Married already !” quoth the perruquier, with a knowing whistle, and a countenance that spoke “Benedick, the married man,” in every feature. “Whew ! One wife at a time's

enough for most people. But he'll not be hanged. The fact of his wearing my wig with the hair six inches long will save him. He must be *non compos*. And you that stand tittering there can be little better to let him go out in such a plight. Why didn't you stop him?"

"Stop him!" ejaculated the damsel,—“stop Mr. Coningsby! I should like to know how!"

"Why, by telling him what he was about, to be sure, and getting him to look in the glass. Nobody with eyes in his head could have gone out such a figure!"

"Talk to him!" quoth Sally; "but how was I to get him to listen? And, as to looking in a glass, I question if ever he did such a thing in his life. You do'nt know our Mr. Coningsby, that's clear enough!"

"I only wish he had never come in my way, that I never had had the ill luck to have known him!" rejoined the discomfited artist. "If he should happen to mention my name as his wig-maker whilst he has that peruke on his head, I am ruined!—my reputation is gone for ever!"

"No fear of that!" replied Sally, in a comforting tone, struck with compassion at the genuine alarm of the unlucky man of wigs. "There's not the slightest danger of his mentioning your name, because you may be certain sure that he does not remember it. Lord love you! he very often forgets his own. Don't you be frightened about that!" repeated the damsel soothingly, as she shut the door, whilst the discomfited perruquier returned to his shop, and Mr. Coningsby, never guessing how entirely in outward semblance he resembled the wild man of the woods, proceeded to his dinner-party, where his coëffure was, as the hairdresser had predicted, the theme of universal astonishment and admiration.

This, however, was one of the least of his scrapes. He has gone to court without a sword; has worn coloured clothes to a funeral, and black at a wedding. There is scarcely any conventional law of society which, in some way or other, he hath not contrived to break; and, in two or three slight instances, he has approached more nearly than beseems a magistrate and a senator to a *démêlé* with the laws of the land. He hath quietly knocked down a great fellow, for instance, whom he caught beating a little one, and hath once or twice been so blind, or so absent, as to suffer a petty culprit to run away,

when brought up for examination, in virtue of his own warrant. But it is remarkable that he never, in his most oblivious moods, is betrayed into an unkind word or an ungenerous action. There is a moral instinct about him which preserves him, in the midst of his oddities, pure and unsullied in thought and deed. With all his "*distractions*," he never lost a friend or made an enemy ; his opponents at an election are posed when they have to get up a handbill against him ; and for that great test of amiableness, the love of his family, his household, his relations, servants, and neighbours, I would match my worthy friend, George Coningsby, against any man in the county.

THE END.

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